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Left: Michael Cooper, Ruby, 2010 | Center: Arline Fisch, Paper Lanterns, 2008 | Right: Rebecca Hutchinson, Affinity, 2012

FOREWORD

A MEDITATIVE, EVEN wistful, tone resonates in the pages of this issue of *Metalsmith*. The three featured artists—Kim Cridler, Nick Dong, and Wendy Ramshaw—seem to be musing aloud in their work, visibly grappling with life's larger questions.

Cover artist Kim Cridler's sculptural vessels serve as metaphorical receptacles, containing essential truths about the human condition. According to writer Glen Brown, her vessels "enclose human memory, hopes, fears and desires," and encapsulate "the failings of the flesh to support the boundless aspirations of the spirit." But in their structure and symbolism, Cridler's vessels ultimately affirm life's regenerative cycles and embody a bittersweet beauty.

Nick Dong has literally produced a meditative chamber with *Enlightenment Room*, an interactive single-occupancy cell for self-reflection. Throughout his creative evolution, Dong has enlisted an expanding repertoire of materials and formats to engage the viewer's body and mind. "Although much of it may appear humorous, or casual," says Dong, "as a maker and practitioner I am sincerely serious." Dong's sophisticated earnestness is found all through his work, most notably in *Doll of Compassion* and *Unison Labyrinth*.

The refined work of Wendy Ramshaw—which draws sustenance from legends, dreams, and literary classics, such as *Alice in Wonderland*—is itself an invitation to wonder. Like Dong, Ramshaw continually explores the potential of new materials to express her far-ranging concerns, which embrace everything from Shakespeare's plays to scientific instruments.

Akin to the reaching branch in Cridler's *Felled Mulberry* sculpture, these metalsmiths strive toward a greater understanding of life through their work. And as they stretch and extend the breadth of their art, they sow an expanded field in which we all can muse.

SUZANNE RAMLJAK
EDITOR

The mission of *Metalsmith* magazine is to document, analyze, and promote excellence in jewelry and metalsmithing. In fulfillment of the goal of producing a significant document of the field, editorial content will emphasize contemporary activities and ideas, with supportive content to include relevant historical work and critical issues.

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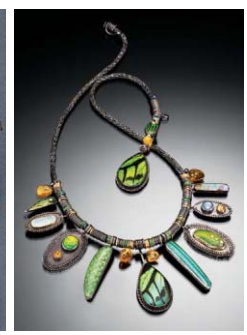

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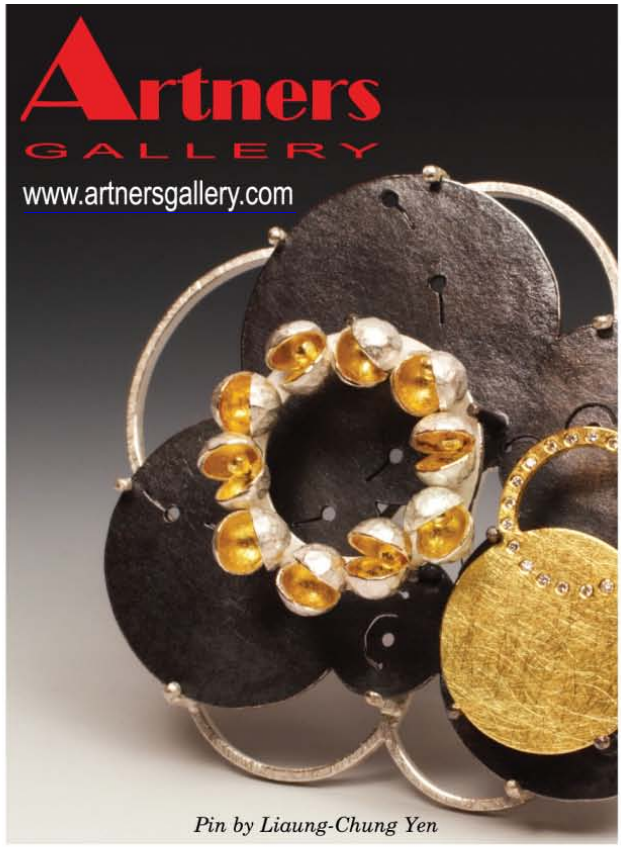
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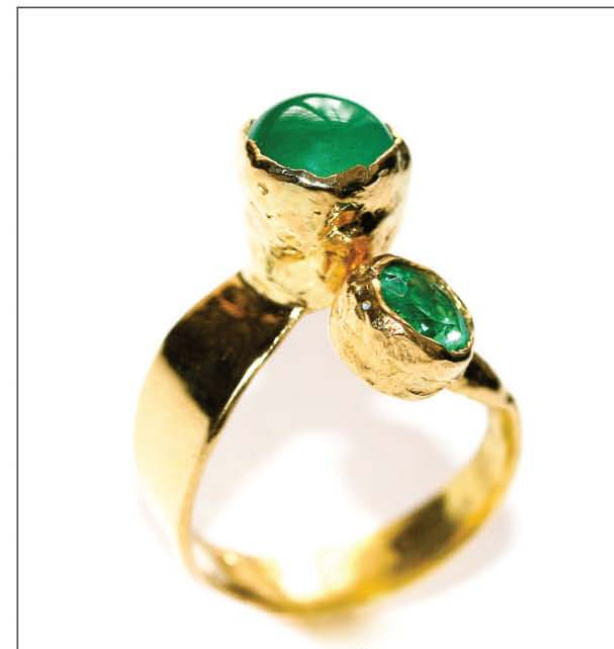
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Bande des Quatres
Keeping the Beat

ANDREA DINOTO

IT'S A QUIRKY name for a jewelry company: Bande des Quatres (pronounced Ban-Day-CAT and with the last word deliberately misspelled with an "s"). It translates as Band of Four, and, no, it does not refer to a certain revolutionary political group active during China's Cultural Revolution. Nor does the name indicate a partnership of four individuals. When you ask 24-year-old Erin Wahed what her company's name means, she grins, holds up a funkily manicured hand and waggles four fingers at you. "These are the four," she says, and then you get it, because on her fingers are the rings, with their illusory gold and silver floating geometric shapes that are garnering the attention of the fashion press, the blogosphere, and a multitude of hipsters drawn to their minimal yet eye-catching design. (Wahed says her rings are equally popular with certain older women, who find the open-topped design easy to get on and off arthritic fingers.)

BDQ was launched two years ago by Montreal-born Wahed in partnership with her mother, the noted Canadian jeweler Janis Kerman, as a part-time project born of a moment's inspiration. Wahed, who works full-time as a production manager at a design house in New York, was planning an outfit to wear for her New York University thesis photography show in April 2010. She felt she needed some unusual jewelry and came up with an edgy design for a ring that appears to be a thin rod piercing the finger sideways. Made of yellow and white gold and black diamonds, it's a simple but riveting image and, says Wahed, "everyone wanted one."

Designer Erin Wahed and her mother, jeweler Janis Kerman, in a design consultation

Eileen Bracelet, 2013
sterling silver, black diamonds
width 2 ¼"

There and then, the idea for a jewelry line was spawned.

Wahed's first design was called Moholy-Nagy, after the Hungarian Bauhaus photographer who had inspired her own abstract work in the medium. While she loved the designing process, Wahed lacked the desire and patience to actually make the jewelry herself, so she enlisted her mother in a partnership that suits the talents of both. The first BDQ collection was of rings, each designed and named for a different Bauhaus master—Gabo, Breuer, Kandinsky. For her second collection, of rings and bracelets, launched in early 2012, Wahed looked to modernist and contemporary architects, from Saarinen to Gehry. Several of her bracelet designs, like the rings, only partially wrap the arm; others, like the *Saarinen*, fully embrace it as an asymmetrical double or single bangle.

Every BDQ piece is handmade by Janis Kerman in her Montreal studio, where she incorporates the project into her daily routine of producing her own jewelry. Mother and daughter "Skype a lot," she says, and work to maximize their time together. Wahed's design concepts are refined through discussion and the use of cut paper mock-ups so that Kerman can analyze the feasibility of each piece as a wearable object. "I'm the reality check," she says, someone who can tell how something's going to hang or rest on the hand.

Wahed manages all of BDQ's marketing, which she approaches almost exclusively through social media. She does no print

Promotional image for *Eileen Bracelet*, from the "Photographers" series

advertising, but uses Facebook posts and e-mail blasts to announce new lines via sensual, high-fashion videos, a strategy that has brought BDQ considerable attention.

Wahed learned early on the value of making personal contact with prospective customers. From age eight she began accompanying her mother to SOFA/NY shows, where Kerman's work was offered through Option Art. "When my second collection came out," says Wahed, the dealer "wanted to show mine as well, and the first year we did really well."

As a novice in the jewelry business, Wahed was late in realizing that rings, because of the sizing factor, are actually the hardest items to sell, especially via e-commerce, which her website launched last year. Kerman urged her daughter to introduce earrings—easy to sell online, or anywhere, as one-size fits all. That was done for BDQ's "Collection III," launched in February 2013, which features eleven multipart earring designs along with nine rings and three bracelets.

Wahed describes BDQ as "straddling the fine line between the fashion and jewelry worlds." The addition of earrings "has allowed us to broaden our price range," she says. "Pricing, with a brand which is not super well known might steer people away from e-commerce," she adds. "If they're going to spend a certain amount of money they want to touch it." Nevertheless, 15 pairs of BDQ's *Meis* diamond, sterling and oxidized silver earrings sold out on Of a Kind, a web retailer that works with emerging designers. The brand also sells through several stores and galleries, and also directly, with Wahed open to meeting customers one-on-one, at coffee shops, if need be. "Someone will e-mail me, say they're in the city, and I go and meet them," she says. "I've developed great friends."

Wahed describes BDQ as "straddling the fine line between the fashion and jewelry worlds."

Andrea DiNoto is a New York-based writer on arts and design.

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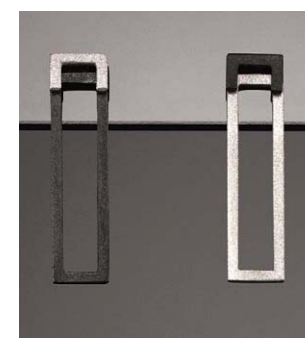
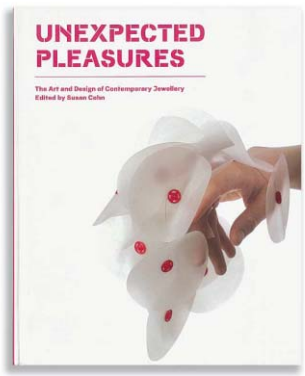


Mariah Earring, 2013
sterling silver
width 1 ¼"

Unexpected Pleasures: The Art and Design of Contemporary Jewellery

SUSAN COHN, EDITOR
RIZZOLI INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATIONS, 2012

BY MARJORIE SIMON



THE CATALOGUE FOR *Unexpected Pleasures* accompanies a 2012 Design Museum of London touring exhibition, which was billed as "a conversation" about jewelry and design between Deyan Sudjic, director of the museum, and Australian jewelry artist Dr. Susan Cohn, who curated the show. The book breaks new ground in print interactivity, with effervescent design and color-coded organizational aids, and as such is much more than just a document of the exhibition.

First, the cover: a subtle patterning of glossy white embossed on matte white forms a background like wallpaper. These patterns are repeated in a spectrum of colors throughout the publication, unifying the entire volume and giving the reader clues to curator Cohn's organizational categories. Inside, pink endpapers and titles seemed a risky choice, an unserious color reminiscent of Barbie dolls and bubble gum. Next, the table of contents, laid out horizontally like a calendar, initially seemed hyperactive and confusing. But after I decoded the introductory pages I found it easy to spot work, topics, authors, and page numbers and shuttle from one to another.

The book is divided into three sections, each containing separate chapters. The essays are not all of equal value, but Cohn's own contributions are exemplary. Section One contains essays by contemporary observers Glenn Adamson, Liesbeth den Besten, the late Peter Dormer, and co-author Deyan Sudjic. Section Two addresses how ideas about contemporary jewelry "will speak for wearers about belonging in everyday contexts." Section Three initiates conversation (emphasized throughout) about design and jewelry.

In the opening essay "The Art and Design of Contemporary Jewellery," Sudjic examines the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century theories of Austrian architect Adolf Loos and American sociologist Thorstein Veblen. He nimbly tracks the development of Western contemporary thinking about the significance of objects and the ways in which meanings are interpreted. Only after some dozen pages does Sudjic address what, to my mind, is the defining orientation of jewelry—the human body.

In Chapter Two, Cohn jumps in with an intimate first-person appreciation for jewelry, noting the impact that mounting the exhibition in a design museum has had on the development of her own ideas. She defines contemporary jewelry as "a family of objects, a making tradition, an established profession and a field of people currently engaged as either makers or spectators." Mindful of the inherent collaboration between maker and wearer, she emphasizes "relationships invested within the works. . . ," which are manifest both in the book's organization into "clusters" and in the installation itself.

The section titled "Making" tackles the interface of design and making, i.e., "where making belongs in design and where design occurs within making." Cohn reveals the depth of ideas that underlie the making of art jewelry, articulating principles and issues that thoughtful jewelers confront daily. That Cohn herself uses industrial processes in her work helps establish a bridge between idea and process that characterizes the best of contemporary jewelry-making.

The primary value of the text, in my opinion, rests on Cohn's status as a maker as well as designer and thinker. As I read through her introductory essays, I frequently wished for someone nearby with whom to share her ideas. She understands, from the inside out, jewelry's appeal to maker, recipient, and wearer; how makers "give over" ownership of their objects to the wearers. She doesn't waste time defending jewelry's place in the art canon; she assumes its legitimacy.

The section called "Belonging" is a little diffuse and some of the ideas put forth, while noteworthy, seem unrelated and discursive. An anecdote about Freud is superfluous. And why are animals included here (*Trophy Mouse* by Julia DeVille; and a charming mouse and whimsical, crocheted and beaded chicken by Felieke van der Leest) and not in the "Animal Instincts" section? On the other hand, the accompanying images—a variety of heart brooches by Constanze Schrieber, Iris Eichenberg,

The primary value of the text, in my opinion, rests on Cohn's status as a maker as well as designer and thinker.

Design communicates about belonging because it invents and elaborates upon certain archetypes for living. For example, a design object may be adopted on the street because it suggests the mystique of the outsider. Bruce Sterling observes that when cyberpunk fiction became a basis for a subculture in the 1980s, the group's members adopted mirrorshades sunglasses as totemic wear.

> "mirrorshades prevent the forces of normalcy from realizing that one is crazed and possibly dangerous. They are the symbol of the sun-staring visionary, the biker, the rocker, the policeman and similar outlaws."[1]

For a Cyberpunk, these shades might feel like they cast you in an aesthetic fantasy founded in fiction but elaborated onto the world at large. Like any good story, the fantasy should accommodate differences in character, vision and outlook. Most essentially, the boundaries are set up against a mainstream. The Cyberpunks aggressively mirrored belonging on the "outside". Using design language they asserted an exclusive world vision, bordered off with danger signs, marked up in a clear and common language.

Contemporary jewellers voice ideas about belonging through the objects they make. These ideas are founded in a shared creative landscape that reaches beyond the group. *In Unexpected Pleasures*, the *Linking Links* section presents a stream of works that are clustered to represent different kinds of social thinking. Jewellers play with widely recognised symbols, and on first glance they may seem to approaching something like a universal language for belonging.

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Makers might, for instance, play on the *Heart Felt* feelings assumed to pulsate through all human relationships. As a recognised symbol for belonging, the heart stands out. And there is a resonance in seeing it used as a symbol for jewellery. Through making, jewellers can offer us inventive ways to voice our own hearts, to measure how easily we give them away and to show they've turned black when a loved one is lost.

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ABOVE · **Constanze Schreiber** · *Mourning I* · 2006 ·
Brooch · Plastic · 80 × 60 × 50 mm

LEFT · **Iris Eichenberg** · *Knitted Hearts* · 1993–2007 ·
Brooch · Wool · Various sizes

OPPOSITE · **Otto Künzli** · *Heart* · 1985 ·
Brooch · Hard foam, lacquer, steel · 90 × 90 × 45 mm

SEE MORE of the **HEART FELT** cluster → 188

Susan Cohn

Susan Cohn works both as a jeweller and a designer. In addition to the jewellery commissions carried out in her Melbourne, Australia, workshop, she has also worked for Alessi, which makes her designs. The works are not always mass-produced, but they are made in small groups using industrial methods.

Cohn is fascinated by the interplay between design and jewellery. She explores the relationship between people and their possessions, looking for the ways in which individuals use their material objects to send signals about how they see their place in the world. Sometimes she makes observational pieces. *Access All Areas* monumentalises the security pass and demonstrates how a banal, everyday object can take on a different level of meaning. Its relationship to the body is what gives it the quality of jewellery because, unlike a credit card, it is intended to be worn. Cohn is interested in understanding the issues that are important to designers: how value is conveyed and the way in which objects age. Her black rings, for example, are deliberately intended to mark the passage of time as their painted surface degrades.

OPPOSITE · **Susan Cohn** · *Scim Rings* · 2003–ongoing ·
Rings · Anodised aluminium, enamel paint · 10 × 4 mm × various diameters

TOP LEFT · **Susan Cohn** · *Security Pass* · 1998 ·
Security pass · Anodised aluminium · 155 × 96 × 24 mm

TOP RIGHT · **Susan Cohn** · *Cohncave* · in production since 1992
Bowl · Powder-coated steel · 480 × 480 × 75 mm diameter ·
Made by Alessi, Crusinallo, Italy

BOTTOM RIGHT · **Susan Cohn** · *Torn Mesh Bracelet* · 1989 ·
Bracelet · Anodised aluminium, 750 gold · 320 × 320 × 35 mm

Jewellery as Object
Photography has come to play an increasingly significant role for contemporary jewellery. It can document fleeting experiments. It can take the place of the work or even become it when an ephemeral object disappears. Photography can be used to observe the way in which jewellery is worn, and as in the case of Maisie Maud Broadhead, it can explore the place of jewellery in art practice. Broadhead, who studied jewellery at the Royal College of Art, has produced a series of images that focus on historical works of art in which jewellery forms a key part of the subject matter. She makes a version of the jewellery then photographs it in a re-creation of the original painting. *Allegory of Wealth*, by Simon Vouet, a pioneer of French baroque, dates from 1640. In Broadhead's version, the necklace held by a winged cherub is a string of sweets. South African-born Beverley Price takes a political view of gold given its part in the colonial history of the country. She questions the nature of its value, plating humble found objects with the material. In Andy Gut's case, the surreal image of the brooch apparently sprouting like an organic growth from the body is a key to understanding the maker's intentions. Bernhard Schobinger's work is photographed by his wife in black and white, with the work worn by his daughter. Mah Rana was commissioned by the MIMA gallery in Middlesbrough to produce Meanings and Attachments. Her photographs documented local people and the significance of jewellery to them. Carlier Makigawa and Therese Hilbert both use monochrome photographic images to capture the essence of their work.
Section Two: Chapter Five - Worn Out Photography - Jewellery as Object
ABOVE - Maisie Broadhead - *Sweet Necklace* - 2010 -
OPPOSITE - Maisie Broadhead - *Keep Them Sweet* - 2010 -
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and Otto Kunzli—are satisfying additions.

Such minor distractions aside, Cohn offers numerous insightful comments on art jewelry today. In one instance she states: "Some of the most understated expressions in contemporary jewellery are recognised in hindsight as its key moments because they distill thinking that has come to inform how the field thinks about what it does." And, in another, she expresses what is perhaps the most perspicacious truth about jewelry and its meaning: "the community's vision of itself and the world at large is mediated through jewelry values and a love of making." Rarely have I felt, when reading on this subject, that a writer so vividly expresses the essential truths about the corner of the world that I inhabit.

Essays by invited observers Adamson and den Besten are less successful. Seemingly recycled from previous presentations, they appear unrelated to the present discussion. By contrast, Peter Dormer's posthumous writing comes closest to Cohn's in creating idea-rich prose that makes you want to stick around for more. Dormer wrote from a profound understanding of making, on the one hand, and the meaning of jewelry, in all its emotive and historical value, on the other.

Section Two presents the exhibition itself. Cohn's autobiographical vision— "I have applied a maker's approach to exploring ideas"—is rarely found in curatorial statements. The reader's attention is quickly focused as the section bursts open with vivid fuchsia, followed by a portfolio of full-page color photos. Included are Beverley Price's *Nespresso* neckpiece; *Spiraling Discs* by Marjorie Schick (one of the few Americans represented); *Hank* by Dorothea Pruhl, with its rich wood grain; and *Atoll*, in brilliant yellow, by David Watkins. One of the most stunning images is of Maisie Broadhead's re-creation of *La Richesse*, the seventeenth-century French baroque allegorical painting by Simon Vouet. Broadhead's staged photograph features her as the main character, with the additional conceit of a cherub who offers up a candy necklace made by the artist.

Cohn shows how photography can be part of the jewelry/design nexus through examples of Gijs Bakker and Emmy van

SOCIAL EXPRESSIONS: NATURE
EARTHLY DELIGHTS
Naturally occurring forms and finishes are an important source of inspiration for jewellers, just as they are for artists and designers. Sam Tho Duong has used organic materials to suggest natural phenomena; in this case, seed pearls are used to suggest ice forms. Julie Blyfield also uses natural objects—botanical specimens—but rather than use them to suggest other forms, she embellishes them with paint, wax and oxidised silver to maximum aesthetic effect. Marian Hosking explores naturally forming patterns and patinas to make complex organic jewellery. But other jewellers such as Dongchun Lee, Carlier Makigawa and Kimiaki Kageyama use symbolic representations of naturally occurring or organic forms to set against the clearly man-made or artificial.
Marian Hosking · Round Banana · 2007
Julie Blyfield · Scintilla Series: Pink and Green Shell · 2010
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Dongchun Lee · Inhale Exhale · 2010
Kimiaki Kageyama → 86
Carlier Makigawa → 86
Sam Tho Duong → 87
ALSO IN THIS CLUSTER
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Leersum's "Shadow Jewellery" from 1979. Other examples reveal photography's ability to engage with the body in ways that amuse (Gijs Bakker's *Bib*, 1975), repel (Tiffany Parbs's *Blister Ring*), or provide comment (Suska Mackert's *wrappinghood*, 2005).

The remaining work runs the gamut from modernist refinement (Therese Hilbert) to postmodern (Otto Kunzli); from constructed (Marie Funaki) to de-constructed (Ted Noten's *Mercedes Benz*); and materially from classic gold by Robert Smit, to Space Age resins from Adam Paxon and Rachel Timmins.

Section Three returns us to the roots of contemporary art jewelry, with examples from pioneers Alexander Calder and Anni Albers, and a surprising 1967 boxed neckpiece by Italian designer Ettore Sottsass that recalled contemporaneous work of German master Hermann Jünger.

Cohn's conclusion, a skeletal chapter on the history of contemporary jewelry, is at times opaque. For example, what does she mean when she claims that, "jewellers were assembling a kind of cultural currency that would inform internally directed displays of authentic belonging"? But her analysis of the current field and the necessity for jewelers to negotiate the tension between art and design is spot on.

Unexpected Pleasures has all the satisfactions and irritations of a major undertaking. Any such selection inevitably invites questions and recasting. Here is mine: Where are the Americans? Though there can be no denying the dominance of Western European jewelry, the field is overdue for seeking out the range of exceptional American work.

Cohn has created and documented a singular multidimensional event, and more than made good on her intention to initiate a conversation. Looping backward and forward, the color-coded references mimic an animated conversation, as if people were interrupting and sparking ideas off each other in real time. Bravo to Cohn and Sudjic for capturing between the covers of a physical book the excitement of the discussions they surely must have had.

Marjorie Simon is a jeweler and writer based in Philadelphia.

Palladium
The New White Magic?

BY ANDREA DINOTO

WHAT METAL ARE you wearing? If it's white and bright, it might be platinum, or even white gold, but then again it could be palladium, the trendy metal of the moment according to the *New York Times*, *Vogue*, *Wallpaper*, and other oracles of the fashion-forward news media.

One of the six metals that form the platinum group (PGM), palladium appeals by way of lightness, durability, and price point—half that of platinum, which it resembles, with its gray-white sheen. While a pair of elaborate gem-set chandelier earrings might be too heavy for comfort in platinum, they are enjoyably wearable in palladium. The metal is also challenging platinum's pre-eminent position in the engagement and wedding ring sector, and is even finding use among luxury watch brands, like Rolex, Omega, and Ulysse Nardin. In the current economy, cost concerns can outweigh the long-held cache of platinum, and palladium can approximate color and sheen at half the cost.

TODD REED
Ring from "Bridal Collection," 2013
palladium, black diamond, white diamonds

VIVIENNE WESTWOOD
Earrings from the "Gainsborough Collection," 2012
palladium
2 x 1 ¼"

Virtually unknown in jewelry circles until a few years ago, palladium owes its current celebrity to the British-based International Palladium Board, recently established to promote the metal's use in fashion. The IPB kicked off its 10-year "Palladium Visions" promotional campaign in 2012 by creating initiatives with leading British designers—notably Dame Vivienne Westwood and Hussein Chalayan. Westwood's faux rococo "Gainsborough" collection was modeled by Georgia May Jagger, daughter of the rock star, during Paris Fashion Week, reflecting the IPB's effort to position palladium as an edgy, untraditional metal. Chalayan, the British-Turkish-Cypriot clothing designer known for witty and innovative use of materials (fiberglass, LEDs, paper), incorporated palladium forms into the necklines of minimalist dresses to show how lightweight the material is on fabric. For his 2013 collection, Chalayan used palladium even more dramatically, crafting silvery wigs that transformed his models' heads into the equivalent of classical sculptures. During London Fashion Week in 2012, the IPB also co-sponsored, with the British Fashion Council, "The Rock Vault Dozen," an exhibition of palladium rings by twelve young designers. IPB chairman Brad Mills explained that the event was designed to bring palladium into the public eye as the "contemporary precious metal of the future." Throughout the US and China, the Palladium Alliance promotes the metal through sponsorships within the jewelry trade. In January 2013, the winner of the Alliance's first annual design contest was awarded a bounteous 30 ounces of palladium with which to create a jewelry line.

Like platinum, palladium is a rare precious metal mined mainly in Russia and South Africa. Both metals have unique physical properties that lend themselves to applications within hi-tech and the auto industries, in the latter as components of the catalytic converter. Both metals are also hypoallergenic, do not tarnish and can be used with minimal amounts of alloy (usually 900, 950, and 999 parts per thousand). Palladium was first discovered in 1803 by the British chemist William Hyde Wollaston, who named it for Pallas Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom and craftsmanship.

While many commercial jewelers are reportedly embracing palladium for its cost factor—as an alternative to platinum—art jewelers are giving it mixed reviews. On the positive side, jewelry designer Todd Reed praises palladium for its "deep, natural gray tone," adding that "it holds a textured finish really beautifully and [the 500 alloy] can be colored nicely by heat treating." Based in Colorado, Reed also values his proximity to Montana's Stillwater mine, the sole US producer of palladium and platinum. George Sawyer, a premier artisan of mixed-metal

While many commercial jewelers are reportedly embracing palladium for its cost factor—as an alternative to platinum—art jewelers are giving it mixed reviews.

HUSSEIN CHALAYAN
Gown for "Palladium Visions," (detail) 2012
fabric, palladium

work, calls palladium's color, "interesting in its own right," but rejects it as an equal "alternative" to platinum. "They are really in different leagues," he says. "Platinum welds like a dream and is so dense and strong that you can do clean, delicate work that just couldn't be done with a palladium alloy." Jewelers generally agree that palladium is best thought of as an alternative to white gold, an alloy containing nickel and that requires rhodium plating to maintain its white color. The metals supplier Hoover & Strong notes on its website the "explosive popularity of white metals over the last decade," especially among adults aged 18 to 24, and addresses issues relevant to its use by jewelers. In January 2013, palladium was priced at $713/ounce; platinum $1,566; and gold $1,693. Clearly, palladium is well positioned for a future in fashion jewelry, if not for price alone, then for its own unique qualities within the white-metals trend. Pallas Athena is having her fashion moment.

Andrea DiNoto is a New York-based writer on arts and design.

Furthermore:
www.palladiumboard.com
www.luxurypalladium.com
"All About Palladium" at
hooverandstrong.com

The "Rock Vault Dozen" exhibition of palladium rings by twelve young designers, 2012

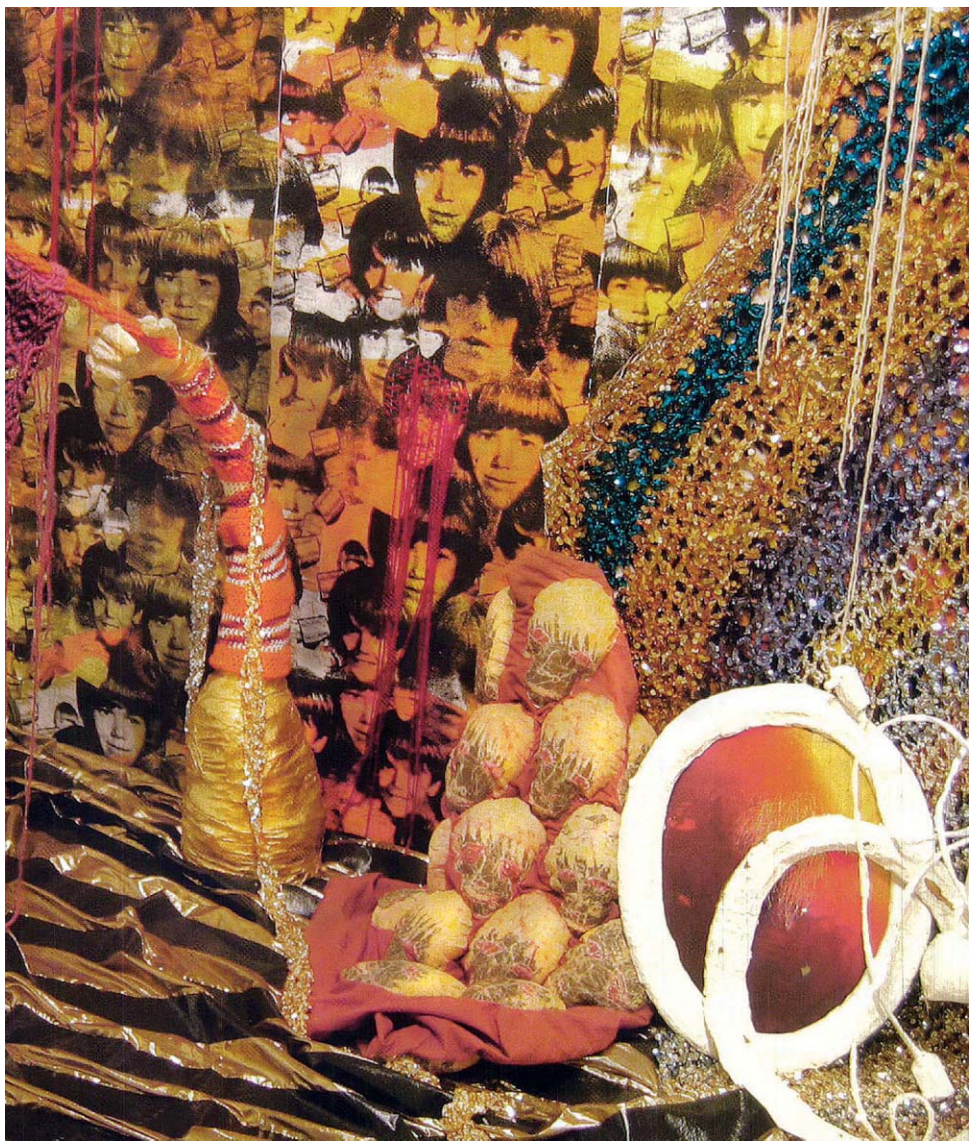
Sloppy and Ugly

BY BRUCE METCALF

THESE DAYS, THE craft avant-garde is identified by the prevalent use of installation, video, and performance art. At least this seems to be the thesis of the recent "40 Under 40" exhibition at the Renwick Museum. In truth, these forms have been around since the 1960s, and have become default formats for all major international art exhibitions. All three modes are now so commonplace they cannot be regarded as being in the forefront of anything. If there is a craft avant-garde, it must be located elsewhere.

As I see it, the most important changes in craft in the last decade have to do with attitude and sensibility, which have grown confrontational and critical. At present, these attitudinal shifts are manifested in a widespread interest in Sloppy and Ugly, two qualities that were once anathema to "good" craft. In jewelry, the champions of Sloppy are Karl Fritsch and Lisa Walker.

The idea of Sloppy craft was first articulated in 2006 by Anne Wilson, Fiber and Material Studies professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Using the word in reference to the work of a grad student,



JOSH FAUGHT
"Nobody knows I'm a Lesbian," 2006 (detail)
handwoven Jacquard cloth, gold lamé, vinyl, plaster, paper mâché, sequins, chicken wire, screenprinted wallpaper, acrylic yarn, dye, paint, batiked cloth, drawing paper, India ink, beeswax
dimensions variable

LISA WALKER
Rubbish From My Workshop Floor, 2007
rubbish, silver
diameter 2 ¾"
PHOTO: LISA WALKER

LAURA PRIETO-VELASCO
Mourning Dove, 2011
iron wire, latex paint, vintage chain, carpet, repurposed copper refrigeration pipe, twist ties, powder coated brass, steel pin stem
11 x 2 2/12 x 2 ½"
PHOTO: LAURA PRIETO-VELASCO
MODEL: CAROLYN ELDER

Josh Faught, Wilson perceived his intentionally casual craftsmanship as a critical stance driven by the content of his work. Following Glenn Adamson's article on the subject for the March/April 2008 issue of *Craft* magazine, a new term entered the craft lexicon.

I see sloppy craft as a purposeful rocking of the craft boat. In the art world, careless fabrication usually indicates the (presumed) presence of a strong concept, untrammeled by such niceties as neatness. But in craft, Sloppy is different, and perhaps more political. First, Sloppy craft isn't polite. It refuses to play by the rules of previous generations. It is anti-craft in exactly the same sense as were the anti-art movements of the '60s and '70s.

Ugly is more recent. I first heard it mentioned by writer Damian Skinner at SOFA-Chicago in 2011. The idea of Ugly is to make something deliberately repulsive. Ugly is equated with honesty, implying that beauty is over-refined and false. In the context of consumer culture, with its torrent of slick, highly mediated goods, this certainly makes sense. My 22-year-old intern, Samantha Toggas, speaks of Ugly as a personal liberation and the setting free of raw emotions. She also sees Ugly as the rejection of propriety and society's oppressive standards for good behavior. Ugly is the kid making fart noises in the back of the classroom: rude, subversive, and quite possibly funny.

While Sloppy and Ugly may appeal to the younger generation of art jewelers, most of my older colleagues reject both tendencies out of hand. But I think they're too quick to judge: Sloppy and Ugly have something essential to say about the future of craft. The attitudes of young makers are changing fast, and their sensibilities are perfectly legitimate. We all need to keep up.

Bruce Metcalf is a jeweler and writer who lives near Philadelphia.

SAMANTHA TOGGAS
Acceptance, 2013
powder coated wood, brass, silver
3 ¼ x 2 ½"

ADAM GRINOVICH
Stacks/Structures #5 (necklace), 2008
copper, enamel, steel, spackle,
textile, rubber, paint
19 x 5 2/12 x 4"
PHOTO: ADAM GRINOVICH

SILVIA WELDENBACH
Made to Treasure and Pleasure, 2011
silver, enamel, plastic, cord
11 ¾ x 11 ½ x 4"
PHOTO: UTE KLEIN

NICK MULLINS
Hairy Brooch, 2009
foam, resin, felt
7 x 6 x 4"
PHOTO: NICK MULLINS

Kim Cridler:
Bittersweet Beauty

BY GLEN R. BROWN

Footed Bowl With Apples, 2010
steel, beeswax
42 x 55 x 36"
PHOTO: JIM ESCALANTE
COLLECTION OF THE RACINE ART MUSEUM

LIGHT FILTERING THROUGH fragile beeswax leaves hints at the tenuousness of individual living things, while illuminating the capacity of life in general to wend its way ever onward in defiance of obstacles. A distillation of the most fundamental dynamic in nature, Kim Cridler's *Field Study 16: Felled Mulberry* traces the cycle of life and death through the protagonists of a tree stump and a fresh sprig that, rising in trembling lines of resilience, forms a vignette of transcendence. Atop the stump, beside the sprig, and drawing symbolic potential from these natural forms rests the framework of a vessel. An obvious analogue, rather than a functional object, this skeletal vessel yields itself readily to the embrace of metaphor, hinting at complex relationships between human-made objects and the elusive concepts of time, mortality, and eternity. As in all of Cridler's sculptures and installations, the vessel's incapacity as a literal container heightens its conceptual resonance. Absorbing the metaphorical connotations of its surroundings, the vessel condenses into a pure ideal that encloses human memory, hopes, fears, and desires.

Field Study 16: Felled Mulberry, 2012
steel, beeswax
71 x 18 x 21"
PHOTO: VERMILLION PHOTOGRAPHY

Cridler first enlisted the framework vessel as a receptacle of the conceptual some 20 years ago while still a graduate student at SUNY New Paltz. Under the tutelage of Jamie Bennett and Fred Woell, she had been working diligently at jewelry making, but an encounter with The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston's 1987 exhibition catalogue *Marks of Achievement: Four Centuries of American Presentation Silver* opened her eyes to the significance of the handcrafted vessel as an element of material culture. "The essays described the meanings residing in ceremonial hollowware," she recalls. "They stressed the sentimental value of objects that might be passed down through families, the larger political expressions of power or control conveyed by works in precious material, and the importance of continuity, association with the glories of the past through neoclassical form: all these fabulous reasons, cultural and social, why hollowware vessels were significant. Those ideas opened for me a really meaningful place to work in the vessel format."

While the vessel's capacity to signify in social contexts is generally bound to physical use, Cridler's decision to negate utilitarian potential by abstracting of the vessel to a grid of contour lines is consistent with analytical artistic strategies since the late 19th century. What separates Cridler's reductive practice from that of modernist abstraction, however, is that her aim is not a revelation of essence but rather reduction to emptiness: a truly *hollow* ware that, like a tabula rasa, can absorb meanings from the environment with minimal internal interference. "What

was evident to me," she explains, "was that vessels acquired other meanings, that they weren't just functional. There was a whole web of sensory information surrounding these objects that included things like the historical, the cultural, and the familiar experience of using an object that was made by people in your family. So I started making objects that spoke of these other meanings of hollowware that were perhaps nostalgic and sentimental but also about cultural memory."

Recognizing that cultural memory may be alluded to but not defined by the individual artist, Cridler has sought to accrete meanings in emptied vessels by filling them with personal memories and connotations that may rise to the level of the general for her viewers, but that originate in the authenticity of her particular experience. Cridler grew up in a rural home where objects such as handmade vessels chronicled her family's history, but perhaps the most foundational of her memories involves a functional vessel far removed from the kitchen counter and dining room sideboard. "One of my strongest memories from childhood," she recalls, "was sittting in a gravity bin, one of those wagons that they pull behind tractors for collecting grain. I used to play in gravity bins full of wheat, literally within a huge vessel full of wealth. The agrarian experience is of birth, death, and rebirth and collecting wealth in the form of grain or any other kind of fruits of labor."

The gravity bin of Cridler's childhood, through echoes of its material and spatial properties, haunts her later work

Kept, 2000 (full view and detail)
steel, egg shells, satin
vessel height 79"

"My Wisconsin Home," 2012
installation view at Racine Art Museum
steel, plate glass, bronze, horn, beeswax, carnelian, marble, howlite, mother of pearl, blown glass, silver, copper, brass

as an artist. In some cases towering eight feet in height, her welded-steel vessels could easily encompass the human body. Just as significant, however, are the allusions they often make to the concentration and containment of an agricultural bounty. *Footed Bowl with Apples*, for example, consists of a steel-framework vessel, 5 feet in diameter, crowned with leaves and apples of tawny beeswax. At first glance, the sculpture might seem a straightforward reference to orchards and the harvest. It was, in fact, inspired by "the experience in fall of travelling through the countryside and seeing some of those renegade apple trees that no one has picked, gorgeous structures with golden globes of apples still hanging from them."

Representational elements in Cridler's works do not, however, serve simply as vehicles of narrative. They also act, like the framework vessels to which they cling, as a visual disquisition on the nature of craft objects. Their role in this regard is to illuminate the constitution of ornament, both as an aesthetic device enhancing the visual appeal of functional objects, and as a repository of cultural, and historical meanings that tie such objects to particular contexts even as the objects themselves move freely across space and time.

Despite their emphasis on impermanence, Cridler's works are bittersweet rather than morose, skirting the abyss of despair through the saving grace of beauty.

Upon encountering art historian George L. Hersey's speculation that the earliest examples of ornament in ancient architecture were skeuomorphs derived from the prehistoric custom of suspending sacrifices in sacred arbors, Cridler was disposed to conceive of all manifestations of ornament as more powerfully connotative than its reputation as mere decoration implied. Her first large-scale attempt to address the symbolic value of ornament was the sculpture *Kept,* a

colossal double-walled framework vase set atop a 14-foot runner composed of satin-covered, welded steel. Integrated into the steel network of the vessel's walls—in reference to the egg-and-dart moulding of classical architecture, and in speculation on the ritual and sacrificial origins of this decorative device—are scores of blown eggshells.

The eggshells, which Cridler likens to seeds, serve as general reflections on life, fecundity, and the wealth of harvest, but their symbolism is also subtly enhanced by the proximity of the steel runner, upon which is inscribed a Dutch still-life image of hanging game. Death is the eternal complement to life, to be sure, but Cridler's message is multivalent, relating most intriguingly to the vessel and human desire—perhaps, in fact, to the most basic of human desires. The intent of Dutch baroque still-life painting was, after all, not merely to blandish the eye through alluring detail. Rather viewers were drawn into art then returned to nature better prepared to circumvent the temptations of the passing world, and through such sensual restraint to attain the bliss of everlasting life. Cridler's invocation of the *vanitas* image in the context of an eggshell-thin vessel generates a compelling metaphor of the frailty and impermanence of the human body, its vulnerability in a seductive and destructive world. Perhaps more interestingly, it serves as a reminder that even the treasured objects through which we seek vicarious immortality are not immune to the debilitating influences of time. *Kept,* Cridler explains, is "about wanting to keep something for ourselves and the folly of that because we are in an endless cycling."

Despite their emphasis on impermanence, Cridler's works are bittersweet rather than morose, skirting the abyss of despair through the saving grace of beauty. She employs this quality—manifested through the ornamental aspects of her work—as a sign of her acceptance of the way of all living things. "My works have become consciously about cyclical change and the experience of being mortal," she explains. "They're about recognizing cycles in these very large patterns that surround us and how the relationship to those larger cycles, the notion of generations, can be a comfort."

The degree to which Cridler's work has addressed the handmade vessel as a vehicle for aspirations to continuity across cycles of birth and death was made clear in her major 2011 exhibition, "My Wisconsin Home," at the Racine Museum of Art. Incorporating colossal framework vessels that Cridler had produced since 2009, the exhibition also included smaller works from her "Field Studies" series. Conceived partly as a means to explore the consequences of grouping vessels, "My Wisconsin Home" derived its curious dynamic from a blending of Cridler's experiences with decorative arts museums and her everyday encounters with nature in the Wisconsin countryside. Appropriately held in the liminal space of the museum's Fifth Gallery windows, the exhibition contrasted the institution's role in preservation with the impermanence of things bound to the rhythms of nature.

Most representative in this regard was an installation

Field Study 15: Burr Oak, 2012
installation view at Kendal Gallery, Kendal College of Art & Design
steel, bronze
6 x 6 x 16'

Pail with Fish, 2010
steel, cast bronze, mother of pearl, silver
51 x 32"
PHOTO: JIM ESCALANTE
COLLECTION OF THE RACINE ART MUSEUM

Urn with Bees, 2009
steel, cast bronze
70 x 35"

Bottle with Leaves, 2010
bronze, horn
72 x 33"
PHOTO: JIM ESCALANTE

"I want to create tension between the almost intellectual understanding of an object and a really rich, haptic, meaty, sensual experience."

incorporating a 16-foot long bronze branch that Cridler would later integrate into *Field Study 15: Burr Oak*. Initially intended as a reference to Wisconsin oak savannas and the renowned resilience of the species *Quercus macrocarpa*, the fallen limb, still bearing a diadem of golden leaves, readily adapted itself to the prevailing theme of the Racine exhibition. "It looked," Cridler recalls, "as if it had crashed into the space. It became a reminder that, much as we might want to plan everything out (and that window was about planning and ordering objects on shelves) life won't leave you alone. It won't leave you untouched by cyclical change."

This wistful observation serves as the leitmotif of Cridler's recent work, though it always surfaces in tandem with reflection on regeneration. In *Field Study #15: Burr Oak*, for example, the foot and rim of a toppled vessel bear poignant words from the ancient poetry of Ovid: "All things change; nothing perishes." Echoing this sentiment, the sculpture *Pail with Fish* pairs a double-walled funereal situla of darkened steel with a radiant wreath of bronze-and-mother-of-pearl fish that through their circular schooling conjure an ancient symbol of perpetual renewal. *Urn with Bees* combines another variation of funerary vessel with clusters of golden bees that congregate around the circular orifices of an orb: a perfect sphere that rests atop the symbol of death and implies through its continuous surface an endless rotation. The urn below is implicitly drawn into this rotation by the circling patterns within its framework, suggesting the

inextricability of death from the endless motion of life.

Urn with Bees encapsulates the tragedy of human existence, the failings of the flesh to support the boundless aspirations of the spirit, while it underscores the power of life in general to perpetuate itself despite the constant shadow of death. Such perseverance is exalted by Cridler's six-foot-tall vessel *Bottle with Leaves,* a long-necked bronze framework bearing foliage fashioned from horn. The compelling impression that this sculpture conveys of the vessel as container and preserver of life would resurface soon after in a public-art commission that Cridler and husband William Bennie, an industrial designer, received for the courtyard and entryway of Sage Hall at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. Sage Hall's status as both a paragon of state-of-the-art "green" architecture and as the first new academic building constructed on the funding-challenged campus in 40 years made it the perfect site for a symbol of life's tenacity despite the obstacles and setbacks that plague it.

Cridler and Bennie's proposal for the courtyard included five intricately patterned cast-iron grates, the largest situated at the center of the space and serving as a platform for a six-foot-tall bronze-framework vessel enclosing a living beech tree. Titled *Arbor Alma* this literal centerpiece, like its close relative in *Bottle with Leaves*, draws upon a particular memory from Cridler's childhood. "We had a tree that had grown into a metal structure," she explains. "I was fascinated by the notion that despite our best plans, sometimes the things that we feel certain about are slowly overtaken by nature. I thought that there was poetic justice in that. We spent a long time thinking about the right kind of tree for *Arbor Alma*. The beech is extraordinary; it's incredibly long lived. It has remarkably smooth bark that makes it look almost human. And then there's a relationship between beech and book: centuries ago books were made from beech bark. So it was this wonderful tree for reflecting on the interrelationship of man and nature and thinking about drawing out knowledge of the world."

The image of a vessel embracing a living tome writ through with the joys and melancholy of human experience extends naturally from Cridler's reflections on the semiotic capacity of handmade hollowware as a carrier of cultural information. Since her graduate student days, theory has permeated her work in the studio, infusing her sculptures and installations with signs of both ethical and ontological inquiry. At the same time, the success of Cridler's art ultimately arises from the degree to which she is able to make her sculptural vessels, not mere visual appendages to arguments about the meaning of decorative objects, but rather themselves fusions of beauty and function, albeit a conceptual function. The distinctive tenor of her work no doubt derives partly from this fusion. "I want to create tension between the almost intellectual understanding of an object and a really rich, haptic, meaty, sensual experience," she asserts. "I'm interested in the notion of beauty not only as a physically pleasurable element in our society but also as a moral calling. My goal in life is to make something so beautiful that when you look at it you forget yourself for just a moment."

Glen Brown is a Professor of Art History and Associate Head of the Art Department at Kansas State University.

WILLIAM BENNIE & KIM CRIDLER
Arbor Alma, 2011 (full view and detail)
installed at Sage Hall, University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh
fabricated and cast bronze, cast iron, beech tree
vessel 72 x 48"

Wendy Ramshaw: Designer of Dreams

BY ELIZABETH MOIGNARD

Prospero's Table, 2004
jewelry, objects
24 ½ x 65 ⅜ x 6"
Collection of The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
PHOTO: GRAHAM PYM

The Red Queen, 2001–2
set of 22 rings, 18k yellow gold, garnets, anodized aluminum stand
7 5/8 x 1 7/8"
PHOTO: GEORGE GAMMER

JOHN TENNIEL
Illustration from *Alice in Wonderland*

A SHINING DEEP red column with conical hat spreads gradually toward a broad splayed foot, its profile tall and crisp. Textured with horizontal grooves, the shaft has interventions where the capital and column meet and at the waist, where gold and red rings with tear drops dance around each other to form a contrasting band. This piece, *The Red Queen,* is one of Wendy Ramshaw's celebrated ring-sets, and among the most striking and elegant examples of an aspect of her work that has become a signature of her style and achievement.

The Red Queen also declares a consistent imaginative theme in Ramshaw's work, one that has emerged and crystallized in the last decade in installations that play with her own and the viewer's sensibilities and responses to legends, fantasies, and poetry. *Alice in Wonderland*, as Ramshaw herself says, has been a book to which she has responded since reading it as a child; John Tenniel's illustrations, for our generation at least, are the inseparable visual embodiment of its characters and events. His picture of an encounter between the Red Queen and Alice, which depicts a hybrid of chess-piece and human personage, very evidently inspired the formal outline of Ramshaw's sculptural column, not least the foot. The work also reflects her lifelong love of intense color; this stand uses anodized aluminum that lends a subtly metallic glow, to which the deep red of the cabochon garnets provides a slightly acidic note. Not quite clashing, this combination makes us more aware of both reds, and of the metal's matte surface against the liquid qualities of the stones.

Last year saw the launch in Britain of a multivenue retrospective of Ramshaw's work organized by the Ruthin Craft Centre and the Harley Gallery in England. Titled "Rooms of Dreams," it deliberately revisits and expands on an inspirational predecessor, *Room of Dreams* (2002), an installation originally presented in its first and intensely memorable form at the Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh. The installation now plays a key role at the center of this exploration of nearly six decades of Ramshaw's work. The current exhibition is a timely reminder that there is much more to that particular work than the iconic ring-sets on their precision-engineered stands. Within the context of other works on exhibit, the eye and mind are encouraged to look beyond the rings and focus on other manifestations of Ramshaw's distinctive and flexible sensibility.

One of the major successes of this Ramshaw exhibition is its effective juxtaposition of pieces across materials, scale, and chronology. Viewers can follow her career's chronological evolution, but can also wander from single jewels to installations to images of larger projects and then into an imaginative landscape. Eventually, visitors are prepared to enter the enclosed scarlet and white *Room of Dreams* space to find its magic furniture, the secretive

Model for *Room of Dreams*, 2011
25 ¼ x 25 ¼ x 31 ½"
PHOTO: GRAHAM PYM

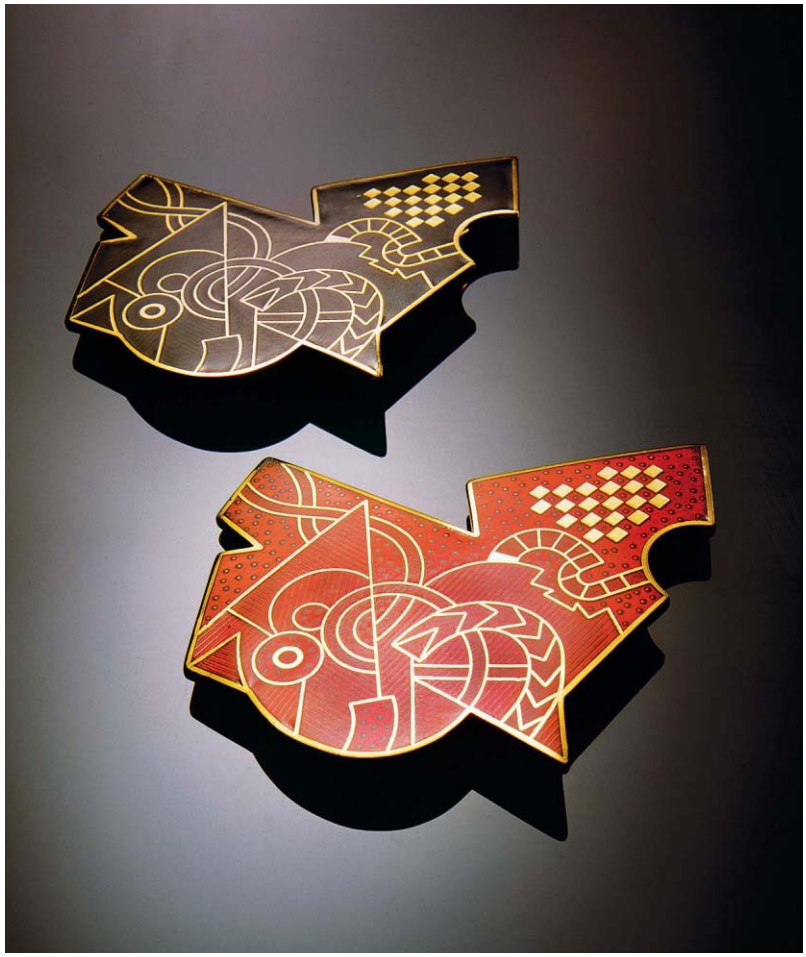
Expressive formal abstractions, two or three-dimensional, underlie much of her work, regardless of scale.

"Cabinet of Keys" with its seven drawers, a "Wall of Dreams" displaying jewels with stories, along with some cautionary tales, dreams, nightmares or memories.

Wendy Ramshaw's early creative education led her into the fields of illustration and textiles rather than the later jewelry and metalwork. A recurrent feature of her artistic career has been the creation of exquisite and precise drawings, some of which have been published as finished, stand-alone works while others have remained as the preparatory sketches that usually precede production. This graphic tendency translates into a very recognizable linear style, a geometric patterning that manifests itself in gold brooches or earrings, and also in larger format works that have emerged since the early 1990s. Expressive formal abstractions, two or three-dimensional, underlie much of her work, regardless of scale, and they represent one of the many thematic threads made apparent within the recent show.

Ramshaw's "Picasso's Ladies" project began with ten pieces of jewelry exhibited in Edinburgh in 1989 and eventually emerged as a documented exhibition at

Chain of Glass Tears for Weeping Woman, from "Picasso's Ladies" series, 1998
glass, blackened steel
16 ⅛ x 3 ½"
PHOTO: BOB CRAMP



Brooches inspired by the Sutton Hoo Treasure, 1987
commissioned as multiples for the British Museum shop
glding metal, vitreous enamel, gold plating
3 ⅛ x 2"

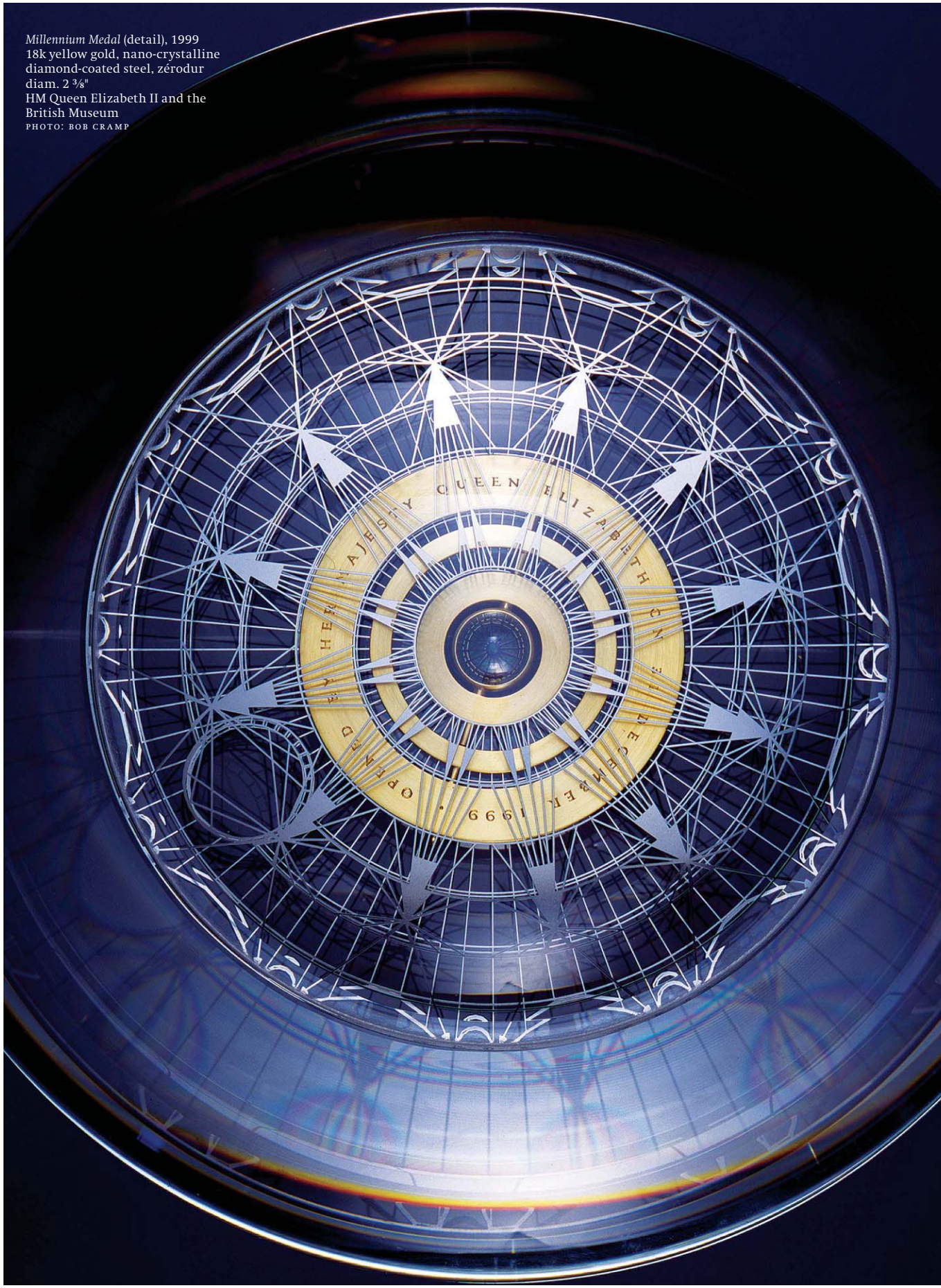
London's V&A Museum and the Museum of Arts and Design, New York. Its responses to over 60 female portraits by Picasso are distillations of forms within the paintings, subtle reflections of color spectrum, and of shifting moods. Any overview of Ramshaw's work will reveal a strand of emotional response to other artists' work: the *Room of Dreams* includes pieces generated by two paintings by Henri Rousseau, and some of her commissioned designs for museums react directly to their holdings including to the works of Kandinsky and the Sutton Hoo Treasure in the British Museum.

A fascination with museums, collections, and the tradition of cabinets of curiosities is a distinctive trace element in Ramshaw's art, perhaps most evident in the installation *Prospero's Table* (2004) now in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. This multiform response to the poetry and magic of *The Tempest* (always a key text for the artist, along with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), features individual items enclosed within the table that evoke the play's characters, along with capturing its seaside setting through colored enamel and glass.

A key piece on the "Wall of Dreams," within the *Rooms* installation, is the recycled ivory *Necklace for the Piano Player's Wife,* which reflects another source of Ramshaw's material inspiration, as well as her long marriage to David Watkins, a jazz pianist and equally formidable designer and educator. Ramshaw has said that she wishes music could have played a more important part in her own life, but inevitably it had to remain in the background as she ran her studio and a strongly domestic household with Watkins and their two children, Richard the printmaker and sculptor, and Miranda the designer. While musical performance and practice were not at the forefront, music still winds in and out of the tales behind her pieces, such as the *Pavan* set of ring-towers, based on the Grimm's story *The Twelve Dancing Princesses* and Ravel's haunting *Pavane pour une infant defunte*.

Her manifest and ongoing concern with precision, technical quality, and expertise is seen across her chosen media.

An abiding commitment to the man made and the precise handling of materials is evident throughout Ramshaw's creative career. The artist has talked about her fascination with the nautical instruments she first encountered as a member of a family deeply involved in navigation and naval engineering. Her manifest and ongoing concern with precision, technical quality, and expertise is seen across her chosen media—whether it is paper, plastics, ceramics, forged steel, precious metal



Millennium Medal (detail), 1999
18k yellow gold, nano-crystalline diamond-coated steel, zérodur
diam. 2 ⅜"
HM Queen Elizabeth II and the British Museum
PHOTO: BOB CRAMP

Bell Jar from "A Journey through Glass" series, 2007
blown glass, brass
height 30"
PHOTO: GRAHAM PYM

Double Screen, 1997
mild steel, optical glass, various materials in black
118 x 157"
V&A Museum, London
PHOTO: ALAN WILLIAMS

New Edinburgh Gate, Hyde Park, London, 2010
cast and patinated bronze
length 49'
PHOTO: GEORGE GAMMER

and stones, or glass. There is also an involvement with past technologies, which are often combined with new materials: for instance the *Millennium Medal* (1999) reminds us of early astronomical instruments, but uses nano-crystalline diamonds and zérodur.

Ramshaw's keen interest in museum artifacts and collections came to the fore in her installation "A Journey through Glass" (2006). During a residency in the Museum of the History of Science in Oxford she encountered ancient laboratory equipment, which inspired the installation's wonderful blue glass forms created with the help of experts at Pilchuk Glass School, in Seattle, WA, where Ramshaw also had a residency that year. These works eventually sat in the window of the Scottish Gallery, radiant with transparent color and natural light.

Glass is a frequent presence in Ramshaw's art and often takes the form of lenses. There are early pieces of jewelry, which use glass set as stones; and some of the later public commissions of architectural metalwork have included a lens, inviting the viewer to look through it at sites divided or confined by a gate. This is an important feature of the early commission for a gate at St. John's College, Oxford (1993), where the lens transports viewers into the secret garden beyond, or focuses the eye on the buildings of an intellectual powerhouse. The *Double Screen* in the V&A Museum (1997) plays with lenses and linear forms, along with the moving vantage points of viewers. Later gates act as openwork screens; these graphic constructions, often of forged steel, most recently of cast bronze, testify to Ramshaw's capacity for partnering her design with manufacturing expertise. The gates for Hyde Park (2010) show us how her design sense works as effectively in monumental scale (nearly fifty-feet long) as it does for the intimate and wearable. Ramshaw's design sensibility is equally rooted in her exploration of the behavior of a wide variety of materials. Her partnership with Wedgwood (1982), and a tapestry design for Dovecot Studios (2006) are further indicators of an informed involvement with diverse materials and makers.

Such collaboration, permeability of ideas and skills, empathy and imagination, has consistently borne fruit over the years.

Ramshaw's work has generated a considerable list of publications, many of which include the artist's own writing, in a voice that is articulate, direct, expository. Her acknowledgments in the 1998 *Picasso's Ladies* catalogue underscore her characteristic working practice, crediting contributions made by assistants and apprentices who helped to push her conceptual envelope even while she engaged them in a minutely measured and intense instructional relationship. Such collaboration, permeability of ideas and skills, empathy and imagination, has consistently borne fruit over the years in work that grows in its historical significance and layered meanings. Ramshaw's *Requiem Necklace for Guernica* (1997–98), now in the collection of the National Museum of Scotland, captures much of this creative spirit: a cascade of blood-red teardrop stones dangles on wires in response to Picasso's visualization of human tragedy; an exquisite object suspended as if in a reliquary, although assuming a form that asks to be worn. And, like so much of Ramshaw's oeuvre, it is a piece that haunts the mind's eye, even as we move away from it.

Elizabeth Moignard is professor emerita of Classical Art and Archaeology, University of Glasgow.

Image from "Women and Home," in *The Blacksmith & Wheelwright*, 73 (February 1916): 65.

Forging On: America's Women Blacksmiths

BY ANA LOPEZ

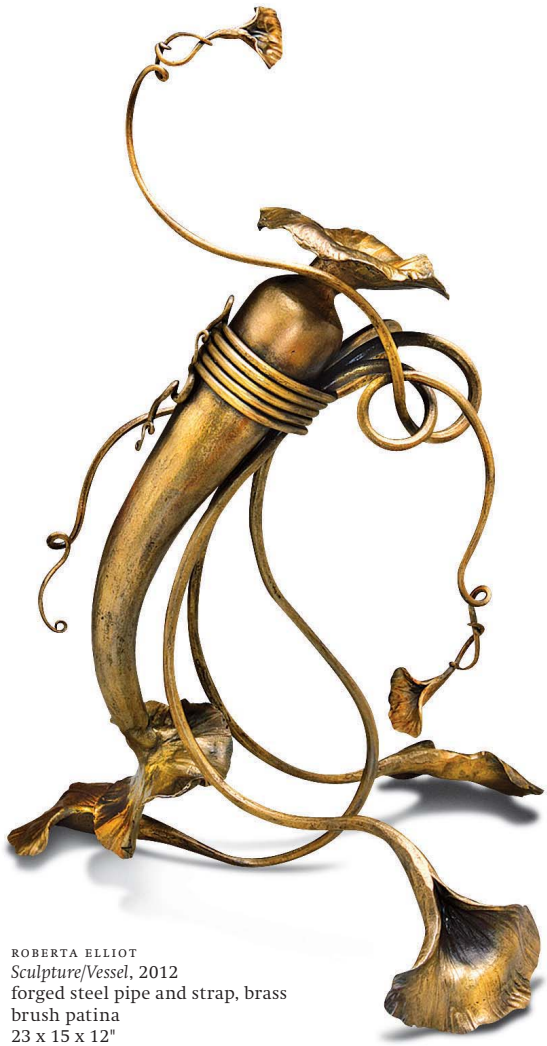
THE IDEA OF a woman blacksmith might seem odd to some; indeed many people would be surprised to learn that anyone—male or female—is still making a living at a forge and anvil these days. However, the fact remains that women have had a place in America's blacksmith shops since Colonial times, and even much earlier, throughout Europe.

For centuries, the education of blacksmiths has been largely oral and demonstrative and therefore controlled by those in whose interest it was to restrict its access. There are records of a few women members in blacksmithing guilds during the Middle Ages, but a blacksmith's wife or daughter would rarely be accepted into his shop, their participation limited to the selling of wares and running the business end of things. It was only in times of greatest need that women were permitted entry into occupations demanding heavy manual labor. In Colonial America, every member of a household, regardless of gender, participated in activities that assured survival. Although training in the trades was based on the European guild system, standards in this country varied within localities according to size and the availability of skilled labor.

A Colonial woman did not choose to become a blacksmith, but she might have been called upon to help at the forge or operate the business due to the absence, or death, of a husband or male relative. Some such women learned the trade well enough to continue in the business, and there are reports of blacksmiths' daughters, who had been forced into such circumstances, choosing not to marry because they were so well able to provide for themselves.

In the early nineteenth century, industrialization began to affect the blacksmith trade. Tools that the

MINDY GARDNER
Koi, 2006
mild steel
diameter 8 ¾"



ROBERTA ELLIOT
Sculpture/Vessel, 2012
forged steel pipe and strap, brass
brush patina
23 x 15 x 12"

along with other items, such as nails and horseshoes, which had once been staples of this trade. Young men who might have chosen blacksmithing were drawn instead to industry, where they could earn wages immediately with little or no training. Understandably, this situation was considered preferable to years of unpaid apprenticeship. Furthermore, the American ideals of freedom and self-sufficiency were at odds with the indentureship demanded by the old guild system.

By 1900, journals such as the *The Blacksmith & Wheelwright* were publishing frequent articles bemoaning the dearth of young men willing to learn a trade, but there were also occasional articles regarding those women blacksmiths—generally wives, widows, and daughters—who had taken up the trade out of necessity and who sometimes continued by choice. It is clear that opinions about these developments were quite mixed. In some cases they were full of praise for the woman who "being needed at the forge, it is to her eternal honor and credit that she does not shrink from it"[1] and at other times they were clearly alarmed by women being "obliged to enter into competition with men in manual labor."[2]

The decline of the apprenticeship system coincided with the rise of the manual training movement and resulted in trades being taught in both primary and secondary schools. Programs in high schools, technical schools, and agricultural colleges were aimed at molding young minds through structured repetition of tasks with a view toward preparation of an industrially based labor force. This approach held greater appeal for the democratically minded, because it freed a trade entirely from familial ties.

However, this formalizing of trade education presented a more fixed barrier to women's learning blacksmithing. Few women attended trade schools, with the notable exception of a Miss Tura A. Hawk. The announcement in 1917 that she had earned a diploma in blacksmithing from Iowa State College and planned to open a blacksmithing shop was so unusual that the story was carried by at least four separate publications.[3]

The numbers of women blacksmiths increased during the World Wars. With the absence of men in the workforce, women were allowed greater access to manual skill instruction and related positions within the workplace. In the immediate postwar period, the need for architectural restoration kept the trade of blacksmithing viable in Europe. With little historic ironwork throughout America, blacksmiths were in low demand, and much of the available work was done by immigrants trained abroad. In addition, the emerging style of architectural Modernism had little need for decorative ironwork in the design and adornment of buildings. The craft of blacksmithing was falling into disuse.

Blacksmithing was essentially reborn as part of the studio craft movement in the early 1970's. It was L. Brent Kington's interest in ironwork that led him to invite blacksmith Alex Bealer to give a demonstration at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale in 1970. This was a huge success, drawing around 50 attendants from numerous states, some of whom,

like Nilda Getty, were women metalsmiths. At a follow-up demonstration in 1973, in Lumpkin, Georgia, the Artist Blacksmith's Society of North America (ABANA) was born, with twenty members. This small group of individuals, who came together out of a mutual interest in the waning craft of blacksmithing, has grown into an international organization of over 3,500 members. ABANA and its affiliates are the single most significant force in contemporary blacksmithing education in the US.

The first active woman blacksmith of the studio movement in the US was Paige Davis. An ABANA member since the organization's initial year, Davis started blacksmithing in 1972 and has been working full-time as a smith since 1979. Dorothy Stiegler is a more familiar name among early women blacksmiths in the postwar period. In her mid-twenties, she found herself in a marriage where her strong faith in God and her husband's agnosticism were at odds. She prayed for something that would demonstrate to her husband the presence of God in her life, and, as it happened, blacksmithing proved the answer to her prayers. Through a series of events beginning in 1973 that Stiegler attributes to Divine Providence, she came to learn, and then teach, blacksmithing. She went on to win every major award in the craft, including the Bealer Award from ABANA for services to the field of blacksmithing.

Women blacksmiths have entered the profession from a variety of backgrounds. A few, like Stiegler, came to ornamental ironwork through the farrier trade of horseshoeing. Nearly half were art students in other media first, and several others learned forging as an offshoot of furniture making. Apprenticeships are rare these days, and many of the women established in the craft have cobbled together their blacksmithing education in journeyman fashion. They have worked as blacksmith assistants and have taken classes, or assisted in workshops, at places like Penland School of Crafts, Peters Valley Craft Center, and the John C. Campbell Folk School. Through a great deal of trial and error, it normally takes a good five to ten years to get a shop up and running.

Today the hotbed of contemporary blacksmithing is to be found, perhaps surprisingly, in the Northwest, around Seattle, a part of the country with little indigenous history of ironwork. But it is here that a community of practitioners is flourishing, many of them women. This is due in part to the learning opportunities and support provided by the Northwest Blacksmithing Association, an ABANA affiliate group started in 1979. Seattle itself is a progressive city with a thriving artistic community. Many of the region's prospective clients for custom ironwork made their money early in life and have few preconceived notions about what blacksmiths, or their work, should look like.

The number of young women smiths in Seattle exploded in the '90s with people like Dorothy Stiegler and Alice James as role models. Darryl Nelson, the official blacksmith of Oregon's historic Timberline Lodge, is responsible for drawing many women into the trade, hiring them as

Women blacksmiths have entered the profession from a variety of backgrounds.

LORELEI SIMS
Floor Lamp, 2004
steel
height 52"

SHAWN LOVELL
Tree Bed, 1997-present
steel
queen-size bed frame

apprentices and employees. The trend of female apprentices was furthered by these women hiring other women as their replacements. Of ABANA's US membership, more than 200 are women, or a little over five percent. In contrast, the Northwest Blacksmithing Association has 515 members in good standing, and of these 46 are women, representing almost nine percent of their membership.

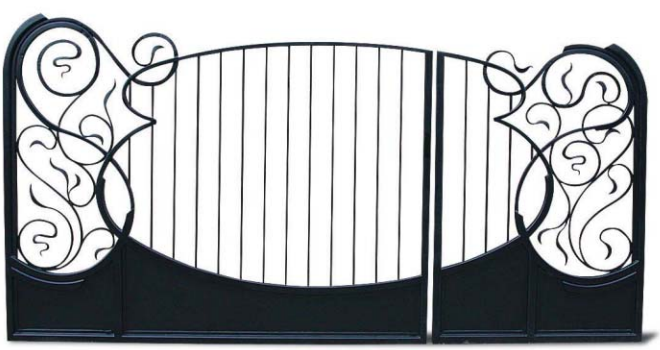
As blacksmithing is no longer an essential trade, its products have assumed the status of luxury items, to be found as custom furnishings and architectural details, or as fine art. Historically, the blacksmith made tools, shoed horses, mended metal implements, and practiced veterinary science. Today's artist-blacksmiths, who are generally capable of making tools, now focus on architectural interior work, public art, and smaller decorative objects. Most contemporary smiths find a need to balance the functional commissions with their more expressive artwork in order to make ends meet and continue working with the processes they love.

Maria Cristalli[4] is a member of Contemporary Smiths, a group in the Pacific Northwest that is trying to push the materials and techniques of blacksmithing into the 21st century and move away from more traditional forms of ornamentation. Living in a rural agricultural town, Lorelei Sims's practice entails much of what the traditional village blacksmith might have been called upon to do. She has "fixed everything from cast-iron skillets to railroad cars." Sims feels confident that she can repair almost anything made of steel or iron. Quoting the blacksmiths who came before her she says "the only thing I can't fix is a broken heart."

In the recent economic downturn, many women smiths are attempting to supplement their incomes by teaching workshops or by expanding their range. Lisa Elias, for example, has turned from traditional blacksmithing to public art commissions, which she considers a more remunerative activity. Today's women blacksmiths who run their own shops are very driven and emphasize the need to be in love with, and committed to, the trade in order to make a successful life in the field. They have come to blacksmithing at different times in their lives: Maegan Crowley fell in love with it the first time she was taught to make chasing and repoussé punches in college; Mindy Gardner began working in steel as a third career in her early fifties. Few if any sought out this career to prove a point about women's abilities. They generally share Jill Turman's outlook: "I don't walk around thinking of myself as a female blacksmith. I walk around thinking of myself as a blacksmith and I happen to be female."

In terms of being a woman in a traditionally masculine field, most have encountered little resistance, particularly from other blacksmiths. Many women smiths describe the community as very welcoming and open to them. According to April Franklin, "Really good smiths tend to be very generous with the knowledge they have, regardless of gender." Perhaps this would be different if competition were fiercer, or if this was not an art form coming back from near-extinction.

JILL TURMAN
Saunders Gate, 2003
forged steel
14' x 6' 4" x 2"



DOROTHY STIEGLER
Gate, 2011
655 silicon bronze

Even so, most women smiths have stories to tell about answering a call from a client who asks to speak with the real blacksmith, assuming they've reached the secretary. Those who sell at craft shows inevitably get asked by browsers, usually older, where their husband the blacksmith is. Some, like Jill Turman, see their gender as a distinct advantage, as it makes them more memorable to potential clients.

Elizabeth Brim is well known for pairing a pearl necklace with her overalls while she works in the shop, as a response to her mother's insistence that blacksmithing is not ladylike. Mindy Gardner once endured similar criticism from a woman at a craft show who told her "You know real ladies don't do that kind of work." To this Gardner responded, "Maybe I'm not a real lady," and walked away. A sense of humor and self confidence seem the best reaction to such incomprehension.

The women who were interviewed for this article are all established smiths with shops that are generally self-supporting. Their average age is mid-forties and about half of them are balancing motherhood with running a business. Alice James and Japheth Howard make a point of taking their children with them when they teach workshops. "I think it's important for the younger artists to see that you can have a family and make art. You don't have to stop," says James. They are also continuing the tradition of family members working alongside one another at the forge. Lisa Geersten shares a shop with her husband; they split the work that comes in according to their strengths. Rachel Miller and her brother both became blacksmiths independently of one another, then, ten years ago, they embarked on a joint venture called Spirit Ironworks.

A one-woman shop typically employs outside help only for larger jobs or specialized needs. However isolated they may seem, women smiths maintain close connection with their larger blacksmithing community. This was exemplified recently when Marsha Trattner's workshop in Brooklyn, She-Weld, was devastated by the waters of Hurricane Sandy. Word of her misfortune got back to ABANA and there was an immediate outpouring of support.

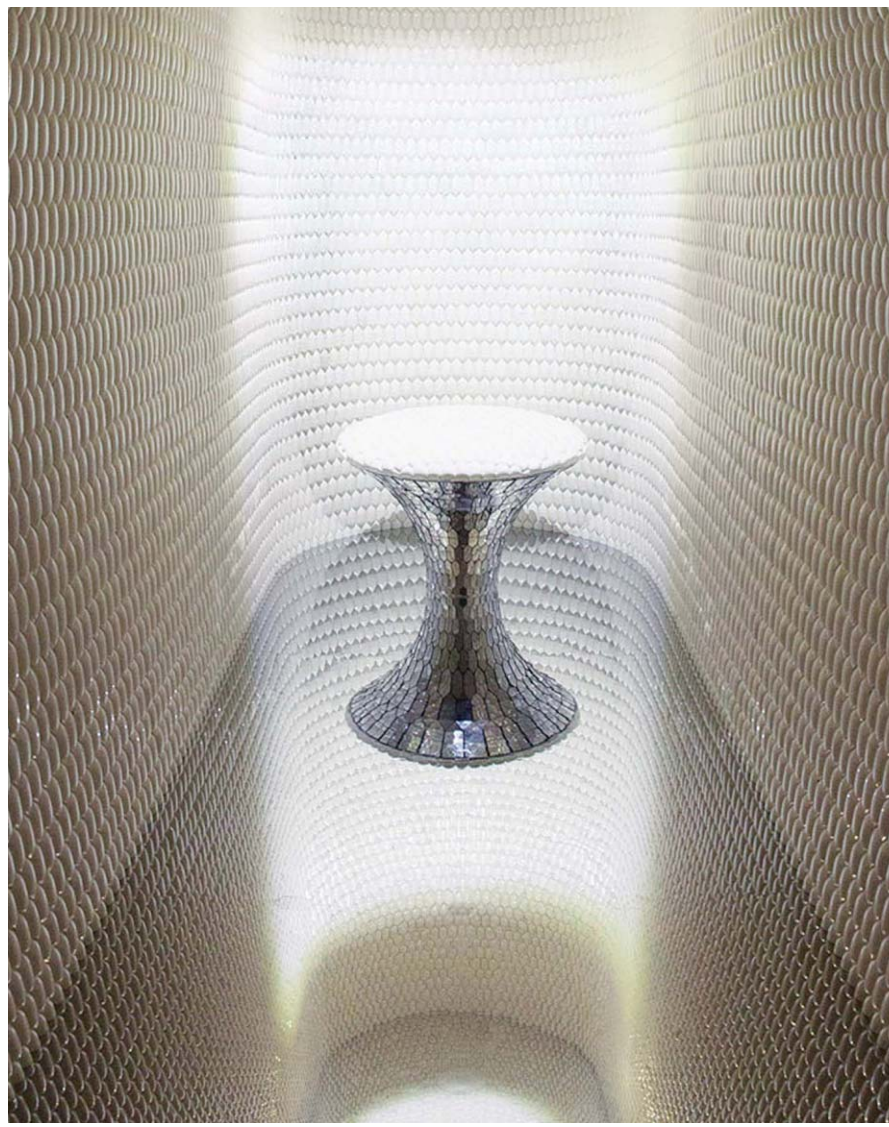
In the past, women stepped up to the forge whenever a vacuum was created by necessity. Now women are taking up the occupation by choice, free of any familial ties to a man in the trade. Contemporary blacksmithing's status as something of an endangered species has served to relax the gender stigmas in the field. Unlike the guilds that guarded their secrets to ensure a trade monopoly, today's smiths are just happy to see the skills passed on. This has resulted in an exceptionally productive period for professional women blacksmiths. Given the amount of time and work required to equip and establish a blacksmithing shop, it is hard to know if there will be another wave of women blacksmiths developing behind this current cadre. But there is certainly no lack of role models for one.

Ana Lopez is a metalsmith, educator, and decorative arts scholar residing in Fort Worth, Texas.

1. "Women and Home," *The Blacksmith & Wheelwright*, 73 (February 1916): 60.
2. Ibid.
3. "She will Open a Blacksmith's Shop," *The Blacksmith & Wheelwright*, 74 (1917): 506.
4. The author would like to acknowledge the assistance of Maria Cristalli, Maegan Crowley, Lisa Elias, Roberta Elliot, April Franklin, Mindy Gardner, Lisa Geersten, Alice James, Shawn Lovell, Corrina Sephora Mensoff, Rachel Miller, Darryl Nelson, Lorelei Sims, Dorothy Stiegler, Marsha Trattner, Jill Turman, and Andrea Lisch of the Northwest Blacksmithing Association, JoAnn Bentley at ABANA, and Stacy Cantrell for her image research.

Nick Dong: Mindful Material

BY BRETT M. LEVINE



Enlightenment Room, 2012
single-person light and sound installation, 10,000 handmade porcelain tiles, acrylic mirror tiles, stainless steel mirror tiles, 633 white LEDs, gold, copper, aluminum
14 x 8 x 4'
PHOTO: SCOTT DAVIS

A Sampling Research of Some Creatures' Evolution, 1996
site specific installation, copper, soil, underground speakers
38 x 18 x 10"
PHOTO: NICK DONG

NICK DONG, INCLUDED in the "Forty Under Forty: Craft Futures" exhibition at the National Museum of American Art's Renwick Gallery, stands as an innovator in a broad, diverse field. In terms of scale, his work oscillates between room-size installations and small jewelry. His range of material is equally wide—encompassing precious metals, ceramic tiles, synthetics, and body hair—but in each case the Taiwan-born Dong chooses just the right means for the creative question at hand, without allowing his dedication to materials to define the direction of his work.

"I actually started working with mixed media and painting," he explains, "because at my university [in Taiwan] there were only two courses in metals." These early classes proved crucial in his thinking about making, and about what materials might mean in the larger context of his work. Dong's first major project in metal, *A Sampling Research of Some Creatures' Evolution* (1996), was a site-specific installation that used copper as a key component. Dong's lack of access to the right metalsmithing tools spurred him to improvise and think creatively. "I approached the piece as a problem to be solved," says Dong. "I tried to work around my challenges rather than let them impede my vision."

In 1999, Dong moved from Taipei to pursue an MFA degree in the department of metalsmithing and jewelry at the University of Oregon. There, his professors, notably Kate Wagle, encouraged him to explore the field at a deeper level. "Being in graduate school was a revelation," Dong laughs. "I was amazed by the skill level of many of my peers and I became focused on furthering my understanding of, and use of, proper tools. With access to better equipment and facilities, Dong could "create works that were more technical, more precise, and more conceptual rather than be hindered by having to use more complex means to solve what were really simple technical problems."

At Oregon, Dong began to explore a series of utilitarian objects that would prove transformative. The catalyst was an evening with a friend at an American-Chinese restaurant, where she asked him why he wasn't using chopsticks. "Here I was, a Taiwanese student eating in a Chinese-American restaurant with western implements, with my Latina friend wondering why I wasn't in essence being more 'Chinese.'" With this cultural double bind in play, Dong returned to the studio the same evening and created a hybrid fork/chopstick implement. In its closed form, it became *Hybrid Implement–West*; when split into chopsticks it was *Hybrid Implement–East*. "Right at that moment I realized that the power of making objects was in part derived by the expectations of the

viewer," says Dong "I decided that I wanted my works to have components that could actually engage with audiences, works that would create questions about identity, about gender, about location and even about use."

Dong turned this realization into a series that both highlighted and challenged cultural and gender representations at an even deeper level. Using precious materials, including sterling silver, he created the *Evaluation Kiosk*, a large-scale installation featuring functional objects, together with photographs showing the items in use. One piece, the *Inter-Personal Masculinity Evaluator*, is a device capable of measuring an object's length, putting a more complex value on the notion that size matters. Another, the *Inter-Personal Femininity Evaluator* measured the cup size of a woman's breast. The works in *Evaluation Kiosk* function on multiple levels, including the political and the erotic. "I photographed models of different cultural backgrounds engaging in using the objects," Dong explains. "I wanted to use the notion of physical difference as a visual metaphor for our preconceived notions of social values."

Evaluation Kiosk was also transformational because it applied Dong's understanding of industrial design to the language and the materials of fine metalsmithing. Dong revels in this hybridization of practices. "I am comfortable inhabiting a gray zone. I appreciate industrial design, fashion design, the fine arts and craft, so I use many approaches to the materials and the languages that address the ideas I am representing."

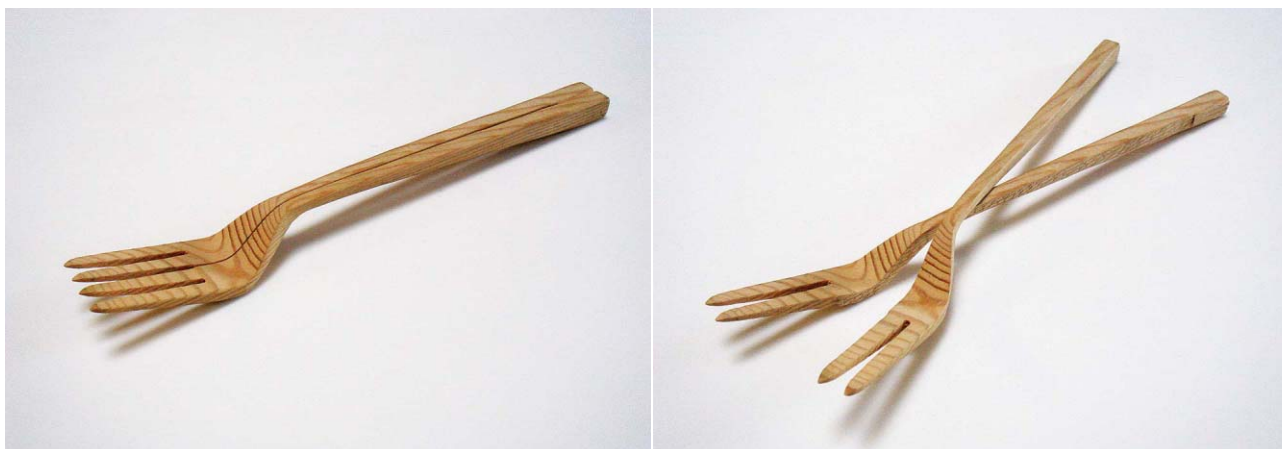
Several of Dong's works include multiple or repetitive components, and he attributes this love of multiples to his metal arts and jewelry training. *The Enlightenment Room*, most recently on display at the Renwick Gallery, consists of a narrow chamber, lined with 10,000 handmade white porcelain tiles, with mirrored stainless steel floor, mirrored acrylic ceiling, and an LED light fixture, including both copper and gold. As Dong's website describes: "While activated, a white light gradually brightens and a chanting sound of meditation rises in volume within this porcelain and mirror tiled room. It provides an intense spiritual and introspective experience." Dong further explains, "My father is a Buddhist, and of course the key goal of Buddhism is enlightenment."

The Enlightenment Room embodies Dong's thinking about how art can engage with audiences. "I think an artist's energy can be imbued into an object when it is being made," he says. "I hope that my intention, although not visible, becomes an invisible approach to touching viewers deeply. . . . Although much of it may appear humorous, or casual, as a maker and practitioner I am sincerely serious."

"I realized that the power of making objects was in part derived by the expectations of the viewer."

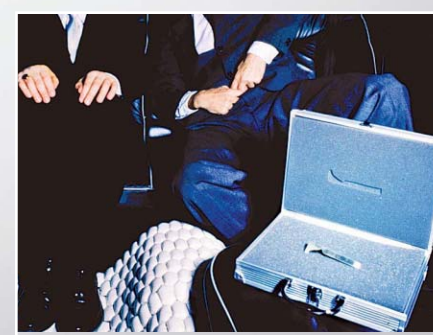
This outwardly "casual" approach to complex issues is a recurring aspect of Dong's work. His "Hairy Body Jewelry" (2005) depicts a range of cultural prohibitions, restrictions,

Multicultural Utensil, 1999
wood
7 x 1 x 1"
PHOTO: NICK DONG



Inter-Personal Femininity Evaluator, 2002
sterling silver
measures cup size from A to double D
PHOTO: ROBERT COUTO

Inter-Personal Masculinity Evaluator, 2002
sterling silver
measures length from 4½" to 8"
PHOTO: ROBERT COUTO



Clark Kent, from "Hairy Body Jewelry" series, 2005
silver, rose quartz, elastic filament.
dimensions variable
PHOTO: NICHOLAS

and taboos. In this series of body adornments designed to be attached to male body hair, Dong again enlists his Asian heritage as a foil for various Western and Eastern mythical and religious icons. In *Clark Kent*, bulging pectorals are contrasted with delicate rose crystals hanging between the segments of a silver breastplate. Both the color and materiality of the quartz serve to feminize the masculine, and ornament the surface. In *Siddhartha Gautama* the juxtaposition of body and ornament is even more striking. Here, the subject—Siddhartha, the earthly embodiment of the Buddha—makes the gesture of Jnana Mudra, or "wisdom consciousness," while wearing a sterling silver and pearl codpiece representing latent sexual desire. Should the physical manifestation of that desire occur, the codpiece will rise in segments like a tent.

Dong sees these works as "a clash of gestures and a clash of desires." In each instance "they challenge the expectations of the subject in question," he says. "Whether by questioning the strength of Clark Kent or the ability of Siddhartha Gautama to suppress his desires." "Hairy Body Jewelry" remains one of Dong's most discomforting works, in part because body hair is as abject as it is erotic, and partly because the photographs, which Dong considers essential to the project, make the function of each object graphically evident.

More recently, Dong has begun experiments with materials that respond directly to human touch. The individual pieces in his installation *Single Room Four Treasures* (2006), demonstrate a unique approach to metals. In *Doll of Compassion* a memory-foam "figure" is coated in

Siddhartha Gautama, from "Hairy Body Jewelry" series, 2005
silver, pearls, elastic filament
dimensions variable
PHOTO: NICHOLAS

Doll of Compassion, 2006
memory foam, leather,
thermochromatic paint, silver,
18k gold
54 x 20 x 13"
PHOTO: LUCY DONG

thermochromatic paint, which responds to changes in temperature. A precious metal plaque invites visitors to "Touch Me and I Shall Reveal," and when the doll is touched, or embraced, the "skin" becomes transparent, revealing a text or drawing underneath. Different areas expose images or words that relate to that particular body part. Perhaps Dong's most exploratory piece in this installation is the copper, enamel, and brass *Still Life Drawing*. "In many ways my use of enamel here gave an entirely new sense to my thoughts about painting. I am very interested in the language of enamel as a visual material." Dong remains receptive to the possibilities of other materials. "I see new materials as a new set of probabilities," he says, "and I am comfortable trying new techniques."

Along with his installations, Dong continues to create performance art in which metal plays a part, but often in a more supporting role. The metal elements in *Hui Xiang*, for example, function as components of a larger experience, rather than as stand-alone objects. The objects in Dong's performances simply create an occasion for the space, the work, and the viewer to intersect, resulting in what he calls "physical aesthetics." "My performance works revolve around the relationship between the performer and the viewer," explains Dong, "while my installations allow viewers to engage with an object. . . to bridge the gap between the virtual, the theoretical and the real."

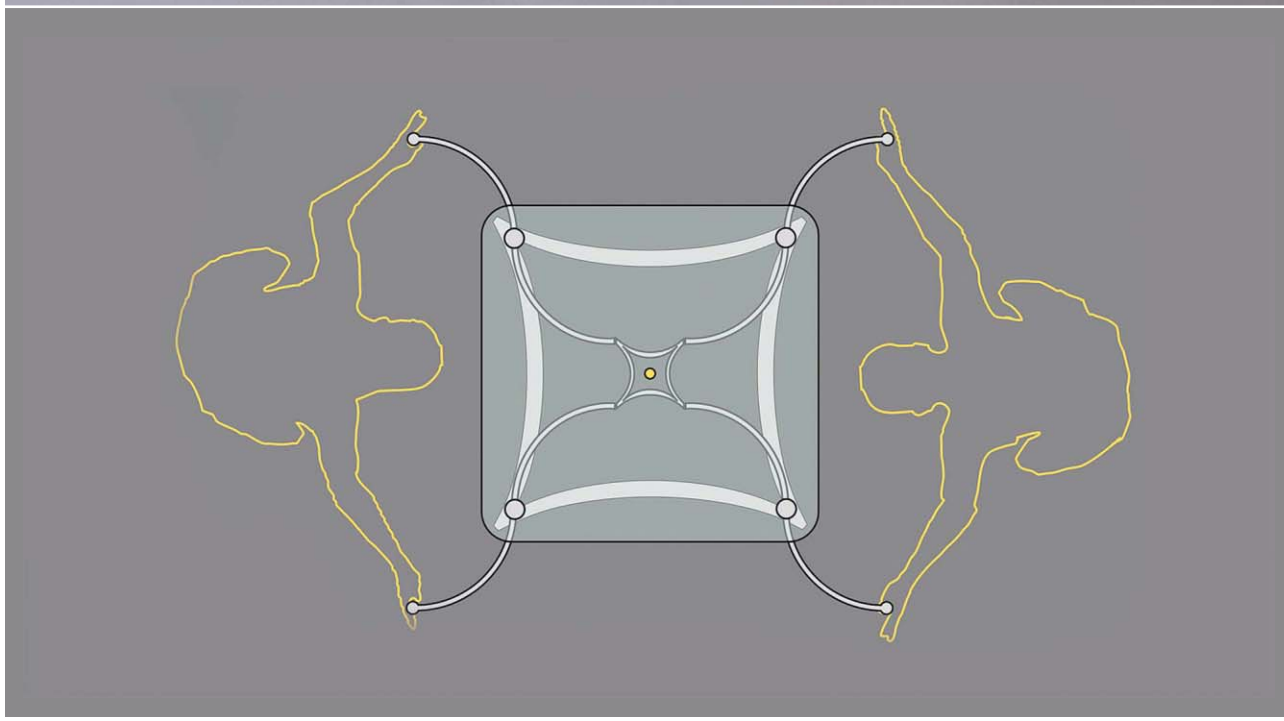
This desire for a concrete intersection between object and viewer becomes apparent in *Unison Labyrinth*, an interactive game for two-players. On a custom designed table, a ball made of one ounce of pure gold is sandwiched between two slabs of glass bounded by a perimeter of gold "strings." The ball rolls freely and is controlled by manipulating the table's level using four levers. The aim is to get the ball to "sit" in a small divot, where it comes to a stop. "I am fascinated by the process of people playing the game," Dong muses. "Some people talk. A father and son came in, remained completely silent, understood the mechanism almost immediately and had the ball in the divot in thirty seconds!" This invitation to engage is essential for all of Dong's works to function successfully. With such works he goes beyond just critiquing the rarefied *object*, to challenge the idea of the rarefied *social event*.

This invitation to engage is essential for all of Dong's works to function successfully.

Although embracing a somewhat irreverent approach to materials, Nick Dong is deeply committed to the craft of metalsmithing. He regards each piece he creates, and each project he undertakes, as a mindful gesture. This mindfulness is intrinsic to his practice, and is imbued with what he regards as a true metalsmith's spirit. "In the end," he says, "I really value this field."

Brett M. Levine is a writer and curator focusing on the intersections of contemporary art, design, culture, and identity.

Unison Labyrinth, 2008
stainless steel, crystal glass, pure gold
38 x 38 x 38"



Reviews

Psychomanteum: Nicole Polentas

Gallery Loupe, Montclair, New Jersey
November 17–December 6, 2012

by Bella Neyman

Nicole Polentas's jewelry exhibition, "Psychomanteum," featured elaborate wearable collages that combine images, lyrics and poetry associated with the beloved Crete of this Australian-born artist, who describes her work as a "mental manifestation" of her Greek heritage. A second generation Cretan, Polentas is deeply versed in the island's history and culture. Her imagination is further fueled by annual trips back to her familial home. Although Polentas's work was previously included in Gallery Loupe's 2011 "Australian Jewelry Topos" exhibition, "Psychomanteum" is her first solo show in the United States.

Polentas's creations are visual narratives inspired by Crete's past, present and, in the case of "Psychomanteum," an implied future. One series, called "The Battle of Crete," focuses on the German invasion of that island during World War II and was made in response to the event's 70th anniversary. The work incorporates altered archival images from the war, in addition to photos that Polentas took of her own jewelry during ongoing commemorative events on the streets of Crete. To this amalgam she has added lyrics from Cretan freedom songs. The titles of individual pieces in the series, such as *The Siege of Suda,* relate to this historic event. Similarly, a brooch titled *Propaganda Politeia* (2012) features a photo Polentas took during the recent student protests in Crete showing a police officer in a HAZMAT helmet.

A unique aspect of Polentas' work is the text that she has borrowed from Cretan *mantinades* (short poems) or *rizitikas* (folk songs) and fused onto each piece. Although meant to be illegible, the script is an essential element of each composition.

It is no wonder that Polentas, who describes her jewelry as "metaphysical interpretations, a subjective representation of personal and cultural malaise," is a PhD candidate in philosophy at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, where she also earned her BFA and MFA. Polentas's talents as a jeweler should not be discounted, however, and close examination of the construction of each piece leaves the viewer in awe. While foregoing traditional materials, she still refers to the manipulated metal-images (her own photographs or illustrations) as "gems," setting each one in a metal frame that functions as a bezel. She has recently started to print these images on aluminum, which makes the jewelry lighter, a prudent step that allows her to not only add more pictures but also enlarge their size. Both of these developments are significant as the images are central to her jewelry.

Polentas uses sterling silver (the only material that allows fusing of the script onto the silver substrate) for her ribbon-like chains and shanks, which are made deliberately thin so that when painted the material becomes ambiguous and has a paper-like quality. The combination of text, image, and color makes for striking and unique works of art. It should also be said that like many jewelry artists working today, Polentas is less concerned with wearability than with aesthetics.

For an artist as meticulous as Polentas, the display of the work is integral to her vision. This brings us to the exhibition's title, "Psychomanteum," which refers to the pools of water that served as a medium for Ancient Greek oracles. At Gallery Loupe, Polentas installed the jewelry on hexagonal vessels filled with water that captured the work's reflections and appeared as apparitions, allowing us a glimpse into the past as well as the future. A video, *I Still Did Not Know Where to Look: A Metonymy of Crisis, Resistance and Rebirth,* was projected onto the rear wall of the gallery. Like the jewelry, its form is a collage of sights (photos taken during Polentas's visits to Crete) and sounds (church bells and Cretan Rizitikas) that bring the island to life.

Installation view of "Psychomanteum: Nicole Polentas" at Gallery Loupe

Propaganda Politeia (brooch), 2012
sterling silver, paint, epoxy, marble, veneer, image, stainless steel
4 ¾ x 4 ⅜ x 1 ¾"

Bella Neyman is a Brooklyn-based design historian whose weekly design journal can be found at objectsnotpaintings.com

Paolo Marcolongo: Breath's Shadow

Aaron Faber Gallery, New York, New York
November 23, 2012–January 31, 2013

by Ursula Ilse-Neuman

Three Rings, 2012
murano glass, sterling silver
dimensions variable

Just when it seemed nothing new could be said about the potential of glass as a medium for art jewelry, the Aaron Faber Gallery presented recent works by Italian Paolo Marcolongo and indisputably demonstrated otherwise. The innovations this artist has made in exploiting glass—both within his own oeuvre and as a delightfully fresh direction in ring-making—are exciting and thought-provoking.

Born in Padua in 1956, Marcolongo was a graduate of that city's renowned Pietro Selvatico School. He went on to study sculpture at the Venice Art Academy, returned to Pietro Selvatico in 1984 to teach plastic arts, and since 1996 has been on the faculty of Amedeo Modigliani, the Padua State Art School. Additionally, Marcolongo has promoted art jewelry, as director of Gallery PD 362 from 1996 to 1998 and at his own gallery, Gallery Marcolongo, from 1999 until its closing in 2005. The artist's early jewelry consisted of geometric components made of a variety of precious or base metals, including those with a rusted or corroded appearance. In the 1990s, he turned to glass as a medium for jewelry, creating a series of abstract rings that featured prominent glass "gemstones." Reminiscent of minimalist sculpture, these colorful designs reflected an interest in geometry then prevalent with the Padua School masters and students.

Bianchi (ring), 2012
murano glass, sterling silver, synthetic ruby
1 ⅛ x 2 x 1 ¼"

The amorphous, yet suggestively erotic forms at the center of this recent series of rings, resulted from the artist's collaboration with a Murano glass-blower who instructed him over several years in the physically and mentally demanding techniques of flame-working. The "Breath's Shadow" series is a joyous demonstration of Marcolongo's mastery of this difficult process.

For the artist, blowing the glass for this ring series was akin to an almost mystical filling of emptiness with life. Working rapidly, with precise eye-hand coordination and yoga breathing techniques learned during trips to the Far East, Marcolongo blew each glass bubble through a cast-silver ring that goes around the wearer's finger. The delicate forms were summoned from his subconscious and depended on his stopping his breath at the decisive moment when the blown shape seemed right. From start to finish, the blowing process for each ring took a mere one to three seconds. To add a unique personality to some of the rings, Marcolongo inhaled briefly at the end in order to reverse the inflation and produce small depressions in the contours; in others he manually tweaked the hot glass to form tiny bulges that resemble the surface of a prickly pear.

Marcolongo enlisted a wide palette of colors—bright lemon yellows, intense lapis blues, deep wine reds—and through the use of Murano's unmatched method of combining metallic coloring agents into molten glass, creating shimmering silvers, opaque mottled golds, and even dense greens that masquerade as shiny ceramic glazes. A number of the surfaces were sandblasted to give them a soft, skin-like appearance, while in others silver-mirrored glass on the outside, or as interior linings, produce light properties ranging from transparent to translucent to opaque.

As a final and particularly whimsical touch, a number of the flamboyant glass bubbles are encircled by additional ornamental silver bands that are playfully set with zirconia diamonds or ersatz rubies. The modest and "chaste" ringlets are in stark contrast to the voluptuous glass shapes upon which they are placed.

While the quirky personalities of the individual pieces in the "Breath's Shadow" series are captivating, when the rings are presented as an ensemble, the viewer gets to feast his eyes on a humorously surreal tableau of breasts, buttocks, phalluses, fruits and vegetables, and nebulous, blob-like creatures.

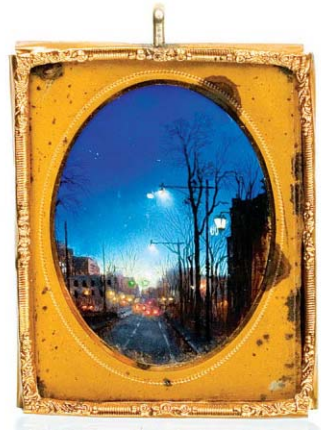
The synergy of art, craft, and design is strongly at work in these highly sculptural pieces. My hope is that these original creations never become formulaic, because the appeal of what is arguably Marcolongo's most successful works to date relies on spontaneity and surprise.

Ursula Ilse-Neuman is curator of jewelry at the Museum of Arts and Design, New York.

Beyond Bling: The Artist as Jeweler

Claire Oliver Gallery, New York, New York
November 29, 2012–January 12, 2013

by Toni Greenbaum



DINA BRODSKY
Pendant, 2012
oil painting, locket

Jewelry by painters and sculptors became a relevant aesthetic activity during the 20th century. To some, like Alexander Calder, Harry Bertoia and Ibram Lassaw, jewelry was an integral part of their oeuvres. Fine art galleries have sporadically mounted exhibitions of jewelry by those who, although intrigued, have artistic concerns generally unrelated to jewelry. Few gallerists, however, have been more enthusiastic about showing jewelry by artists than Chelsea's Claire Oliver.

"Beyond Bling: The Artist as Jeweler" was an invitational show, comprised of 76 pieces by 33 established and emerging artists, most of whom were from Oliver's own stable. Few of the artists possess skills usually associated with jewelry-making, although some of their practices lend themselves more compatibly to the craft than others.

Sculptor Jessica Joslin, for example, mounted actual animal skulls on antique brass hardware to create impeccably crafted brooches that parallel her larger-scale works. Herb Jackson, a seasoned abstract painter, made miniature versions of his grand iridescently textured acrylic works that he mounted on sterling silver backings, as brooches. Both Dina Brodsky, who fits tiny, pristine oil paintings into vintage lockets, and Charlotte Potter, whose hand-engraved glass cameos hang from multiple chains, seem very much at home with jewelry, since their dainty adornments utilized techniques with which they are already accustomed.

A couple of artists, whose practices are far removed from jewelry, studied small-scale casting in preparation for Oliver's project. Swiss figurative artist Andy Denzler modeled a patinated bronze necklace and several rings that, although a bit cumbersome, achieve a satisfying presence relating to his abstract sculpture, while also reminiscent of ancient artifacts. Unfortunately, the same can't be said for Jason Willaford, a multidisciplinary artist who currently constructs quilted "pop" assemblages from repurposed vinyl billboard signage. Willaford taught himself to cast in a week, and his sterling silver and Swarovski crystal pendant, *Fist Full of Dollars*, looks and feels like a neophyte's rudimentary attempt. Willaford would benefit from studying Gerd Rothmann's necklace, *Aus der Werkstatt von Tiffany* (2012), for inspired ideas on how to achie a lightweight, quilted effect (assuming that is what he was aiming for) in a jewelry object.

A few jewels toy with conce at the expense of craftsmanship and/or embellishment, and fail due to vague symbolism. Bernardi Roig's ring mad from the surgically removed gallstone of Fernando Castro, chief curator at Madrid's Rein Sofía Museum, doesn't resonat independently of its original referent. And the gall-"stone," haphazardly glued to a cheap vending machine band, is unsightly; consequently, as jewelry, it is wanting as both idea and ornament.

Some important glass artists participated in the exhibition, including Andrew Erdos, known for dystopian installations that combine silvered glass with video, and Beth Lipman, who creates spectacular glass still life sculptures. Unfortunately, the latter's glass and argentinium *Residue Collar*, although dramatic, lacked the body-conscious grace present in similar works from the late-1960s master jewelers Arline Fisch and Claire Falkenstein, pioneers of fluid, full-body jewelry. It was disappointing to see Lipman's contribution, admittedly ambitious, fall flat.

The most successful entries were those designed by the artist but fabricated (in editions) by a professional artisan, bringing to mind jewelry by such notables as Man Ray, Pol Bury and Lucio Fontana, realized in the late 1960s/early 1970s by Milan's GEM Montebello. In this vein, Alexis Smith, William T. Wiley, and Linda Benglis each conceived jewels that surprise as well as engage. Smith's rigid silver, ruby, and sapphire snake necklace, aptly titled *Sidewinder*, morphs from a reptile into a speeding train. "Funk" artist Wiley's two-part silver scatter pins, *Who Is Not a Hostage?*, depict a menacing, hooded visage along with an independent revolver (which can be placed fore or aft). And Benglis's imposing necklace and brooch, based upon floral forms, are simply beautiful objects.

Oliver's gallery, the quintessential Chelsea arena, is a huge, airy, and alluring environment perfect for large paintings and free-standing sculptures. To this end, the exhibition would have benefited from an installation that took full advantage of the space, with tableaux individualizing each piece. Instead, they were crowded into commercial jewelry display cases, on mass-produced black velvet props. It was heartening nonetheless to witness artists' jewelry under the High Line, even if

ALEXIS SMITH
Sidewinder, 2012
sterling silver, ruby, saphire
8 ⅜ x 5 ½ x 1 ½"

the lesson to be learned is that theoretically, as well as technically, jewelry has different considerations than painting, sculpture, photography, video, and assemblage, and that facility with one, or more, doesn't necessarily carry over.

Toni Greenbaum is a Brooklyn-based art historian specializing in 20th- and 21st-century jewelry and metalwork.

Legends: Studio Jewelry by Emily Cobb

Philadelphia Art Alliance, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
September 6–December 10, 2012

by Michelle Phelan

The Elk with Antlers that Never Stopped Growing (headpiece), 2010
glass-filled nylon, photopolymer, gypsum

In this, her first solo exhibition in Philadelphia, Emily Cobb presents a collection of intriguing works that demonstrate a thorough mastery of CAD technique, an imaginative conceptual basis, and a deeply intuitive understanding of how jewelry can interact—anatomically and figuratively—with the human body. Cobb's exhibition consists of 13 pieces of studio jewelry, ranging from rings, to earpieces, to headpieces and brooches that illustrate contemporary fairy tales and fantastical narratives. Her materials are mainly photopolymer and nylon, but also include silicone, stainless steel, sterling silver, gypsum, and glass.

Walking through the exhibition is like exploring a strange library of dreams. It is as though, through the creation of each story, Cobb simultaneously made manifest an illustrative being from the imagined scenario, causing it to suddenly appear in the real world. Through the various ways that Cobb's jewelry interacts with the body, a sense of the inextricable connectivity between a piece and its wearer is sensitively illustrated.

Instead of adorning the wearer, the jewelry seems to wear the wearer herself, as it would sit atop a pedestal. In Cobb's *Experiment #2: Lily Pad Mouse* ring, the lily pads rest atop the wearer's fingers as the flesh transforms into water; the plant's roots extend down below the fingers to coalesce atop the mouse's head. The thin pink tail of the mouse curls back around the lily pads as if to ease his travel, but in reality it serves to close the form around the wearer's fingers and secure the ring on the hand. Cobb's jewelry forces the wearer to assume whatever position is necessary to support the piece properly for as long as it's worn. While wearing the *Lily Pad Mouse* ring, the fingers must be kept parallel, thus actively forming the surface of the water until the piece is removed.

Another such work that poignantly demonstrates this aspect of Cobb's jewelry is her headpiece, *The Elk with Antlers that Never Stopped Growing*. Whether evaluated as a stand-alone sculpture or as a worn piece of jewelry, this elaborate creation is highly impressive. The elk itself is small, and with one hoof raised he seems about to stride forward proudly. But his antlers are immense, erupting from his skull like massive veins of energy. Large enough to encircle a human head, the antlers are hung with dream-like objects—a tiny bathtub, a miniature tire swing, birds, animals, and more. In order to support the headpiece, one must assume the same proud stance as the elk—chin held high and shoulders straight—which leaves the antlers curling about the head as the elk seemingly strides outward on a path from the wearer's clavicle.

Experiment #2: Lily Pad Mouse (ring), 2010
glass-filled nylon

In her accompanying fairy tale, Cobb describes this exceptional piece as being "like a tree with hooves instead of roots," a construction in which every part is rendered with an obsessive level of craftsmanship—from the form of the elk's body to the treads in the tire-swing. Indeed, such meticulous workmanship is evident throughout the entire exhibition.

Along with the jewelry, Cobb includes interactive features that invite visitors to write their own "legends" in the empty pages of a book, and to then share them online, using the QR code linked to the exhibition's tumblr.com site. On every level, viewers leave this show with high expectations, anticipating what might come next from this extraordinary artist.

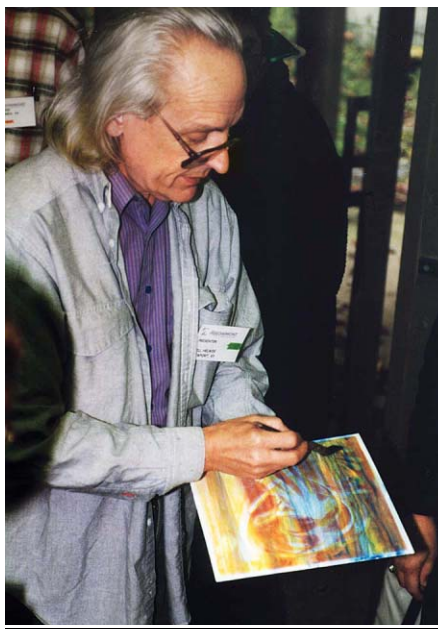
Michelle Phelan is a BFA senior studying jewelry/metals and ceramics at the University of the Arts, College of Art and Design, Philadelphia.

Harold B. Helwig (1938-2012)

BY BERNARD JAZZAR AND HAL NELSON

HAROLD B. "BILL" HELWIG was an immensely accomplished artist, a masterful craftsman, and a widely respected educator. Always willing to share his technical expertise through classes, workshops, and demonstrations—or simply through his over-the-phone encouragement and advice—he introduced several generations of students to the beauty, mystery, and poetry of the enameling medium.

Trained as a watercolorist, Bill was best known for his extraordinarily well-crafted figurative compositions done using a painterly Limoges technique. However, no matter how adept he was at his craft, technical virtuosity was never the end goal of Bill's creative process. Rather, articulating a humanistic vision with richly evocative content—intimate visual poetry—was central to his aesthetic.



Bill Helwig giving a watercolor demonstration, 1999

HAROLD B. HELWIG
Man of Sorrows, 1987
enamel on copper
½ x 6"
Collection of the Enamel Arts Foundation

Through his multilayered compositions in glass on metal, Bill explored such fundamental human issues as the origins of life, the ever-presence of death, the constancy of spiritual yearning and the rich complexity of human social and sexual interaction.

Accordingly, most of Bill's works have evocative titles—*Marriage of Heaven and Earth* (1966), *Angelic Devils* (1968), *Safe in Dreams* (1976), and *Waiting/Awakening* (1980), to name a few—which underscore the importance he placed on poetic content. In each meticulously worked composition Bill created enduring metaphors for the human condition, images that reflect our hopes, dreams, fears, and aspirations.

Bill described his approach in the catalogue for the 1970 traveling exhibition, *Objects USA*: "In my work I embody an enduring meaning of my way of life and thereby an object is formed that has duration: from this, one can come to understand the nature of beings living and dead, and what endures is the unswerving directive, the inner law of one's being, which determines all actions." Through these words, Bill captured the essence of his work and the role each gloriously hand-crafted object played in rendering meaning and, ultimately, "duration" to his life. In a very marked way, Bill's spirit lives on through each piece he so thoughtfully and lovingly produced.

In addition to providing laconic poetic narratives, Bill Helwig's enamels are highly inventive, both formally and technically. While in his early work he typically used round, plate-like forms, about 1972 Bill began to pierce, cut, open, and eventually give sculptural shape to his copper plates, creating objects of extraordinary beauty, elegance, and power. Similarly, through near-obsessive exploration, he discovered several nearly lost enameling and glazing techniques—including grisaille, impasto and camaieu—and reintroduced them to the contemporary enamels field. He also used fuming, dramatically built-up surfaces and silver and gold-foil reticulation.

Throughout the course of his life, Bill's work was included in numerous solo and group exhibitions, most recently in the 2007 exhibition "Painting with Fire: Masters of Enameling in America 1930–1980." In the accompanying exhibition catalogue, we wrote about Bill: "Relationships, human sexuality in its wondrous diversity, desire for the other, coupled with a quest to know oneself, and spiritual yearning in all its traditional and distinctly non-traditional forms, are subjects that have engaged the imagination and creative sprit of artist Harold B. Helwig for the past forty years. . . . With masterful skills in all methods of enameling, he has produced a series of inventive forms that, while still alluding to the vessel, transcend their functional origins. Helwig's virtuosity never becomes an end in itself as he uses technique to support his richly layered, poetic vision."

We miss Bill tremendously. But we're confident that his spirit will endure in the powerful and deeply moving work he produced in the venerable medium of glass on metal.

Bernard Jazzar is curator for a Los Angeles-based private collection; Hal Nelson is Curator of American Decorative Arts at The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, CA. They are co-founders of the Enamel Arts Foundation.

Customer Centricity

BY MEGAN AUMAN

ONE OF THE main reasons makers shy away from raising their prices to an appropriate (profitable) level is fear of price resistance. Most makers actively involved in selling their work have more than a few horror stories involving a vocal shopper loudly exclaiming, "It costs HOW much?"

When someone challenges a price, the default reaction is usually one of defense. "Well, it takes me a really long time to make." Or, "I use this special process that. . ." But here's the cold, hard truth: Your customers don't really care about your process, or the amount of work involved. And trying to sell them on that process is a losing strategy.

This doesn't mean that you can't still care about process. While it can be a very important part of what you do, it just shouldn't be the focus of your sales approach. Business strategist Tara Gentile writes, "While your business is an act of self-expression and guided by your unique vision, your business exists in partnership with your Most Valued Customers." This means that while the motivation and inspiration to make your work may be solely for you, the act of selling requires you to frame that work in terms of value to the customer.

Metalsmith Ashley Buchanan in the process of piercing an element of her jewelry

The solution to price resistance isn't to sell the customer on the work you put in, but rather on what they'll get out of the piece. Your customers (like all people) care mostly about themselves—how they look, how they feel, and how they are perceived by others. And these concerns, not how the work is made, have the greatest influence on purchasing decisions. It's your job as the seller to understand what triggers a customer to buy. According to Gentile, people don't buy to possess an object or have an experience, but instead to "connect with people, declare their status, reinforce their vision of themselves, make things easier or more convenient."

A successful salesperson is adept at using customer-centric language. Traditional marketing wisdom suggests moving from physical features ("It's made of steel"), to benefits ("It's lightweight and durable"). But the most effective sellers carry that approach one step further, by engaging the customer's emotions and stories. "Its such an easy necklace to travel with, you won't need to pack anything else!" Customer-centric selling means painting a picture of how the customer will feel when they own, use, or wear the piece and how that piece fits into their life.

ASHLEY BUCHANAN
Neckpiece, 2012
hand cut brass

In *Start With Why*, Simon Sinek champions the concept of selling in a customer-centric way. "People don't buy what you do," writes Sinek, "they buy WHY you do it." In his book, Sinek shares the example of how Apple's iPod beat out its early rival Creative Technology, the actual inventor of the MP3 player. Creative attempted to sell their product simply as what it was— a "5GB MP3 player." Apple sold theirs as "1000 songs in your pocket." "The difference," writes Sinek, "is Creative told us WHAT their product was and Apple told us WHY we needed it."

Having a passion for process is essential for us as makers. We couldn't spend hours in the studio without loving what we do. But as sellers, we must realize that buyers are in it for their own personal reasons, not to help us indulge our passions. Successful selling means reframing the way we present our work to emphasize what a customer will gain from it. When you talk about what your customer will experience by owning and using a piece you've lovingly created, you are helping her develop a passion for the finished product that rivals the passion you feel for the process.

Megan Auman is a Pennsylvannia-based designer, metalsmith, and educator.

Society of North American Goldsmiths

ARTISTS. DESIGNERS. JEWELERS. METALSMITHS.

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BY DANA SINGER

Jeweler and designer Susan Cohn, guest curator for Metalsmith*'s 2013 "Exhibition in Print"*
PHOTO: KORAY KILICLI

Work by jurors of "Contemporary Goldsmithing: Tradition & Excellence," l to r: George Sawyer, Judith Kinghorn, and Tom Herman

FORGING Entrepreneurs
Tools and Skills for Business Success

2013 "Forging Entrepreneurs" Symposium

SNAG will present its second annual business symposium, "Forging Entrepreneurs: Tools and Skills for Business Success," on Saturday October 19, in San Francisco. This day-long event is produced in collaboration with the Academy of Art University's new School of Jewelry and Metal Arts, and the Metal Arts Guild of San Francisco. The symposium's co-chairs are studio metalsmiths Christine Dhein, Kelly Nedderman, and emiko oye.

Limited to only 100 attendees, "Forging Entrepreneurs" will present proven strategies for studio jewelers, metalsmiths, and designers to make their businesses more successful. This year's presenters are Sarah Graham, Cindy Edelstein, Ben Allen, George Post, Alissia Melka-Teichroew, and Jonathan Russell. There will be plenty of opportunities to connect with the presenters, colleagues, and new business contacts, and a casual reception will conclude the day's events.

Curator of 2013 "Exhibition in Print"

The invited guest curator of *Metalsmith*'s 2013 "Exhibition in Print" is Susan Cohn, one of the most influential designers working in Australia and co-founder of Workshop 3000, which she now runs as her jewelry production studio. Cohn's curatorial theme is "As Seen by Others: Photography as Strategy," and will explore the power of photographs to express the spirit of an object. In our hyper-digital world, the photograph is often the only way an object is experienced; so it becomes the filter by which the work is seen by others. We again express our gratitude to the Rotasa Foundation, who, since 2007, has provided matching grants to make the commissioned curated EiP possible.

Contemporary Goldsmithing: Tradition & Excellence

SNAG's second annual virtual exhibition is "Contemporary Goldsmithing: Tradition & Excellence," opening in October in tandem with American Craft Week. This exhibition of classical goldsmithing in a variety of formats will be juried by master goldsmiths George Sawyer, Judith Kinghorn, and Tom Herman. The exhibition catalogue will once again be available through Blurb.com.

SNAG Technical Articles

SNAG publishes illustrated technical articles five times a year on its website, and maintains an archive of past technical articles published since 2008. In SNAG's latest article, "Swaging Pin Findings," metalsmith and designer Boris Bally details the unique swaging tools and approach he uses to set pins into recycled street signs. Scan the code below to access this article.

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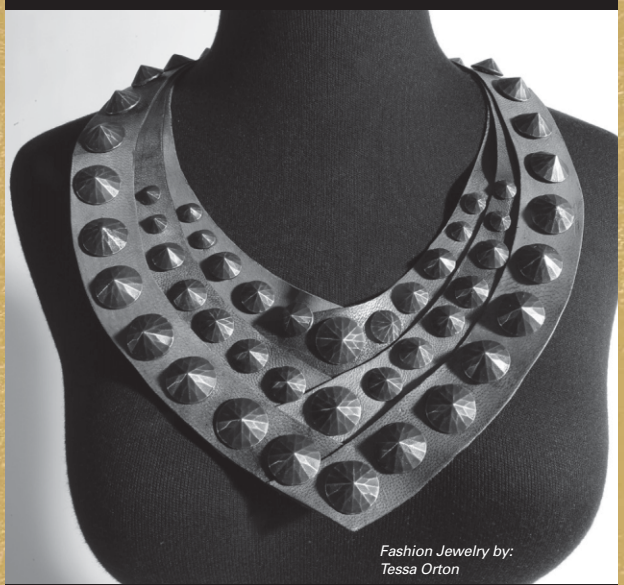
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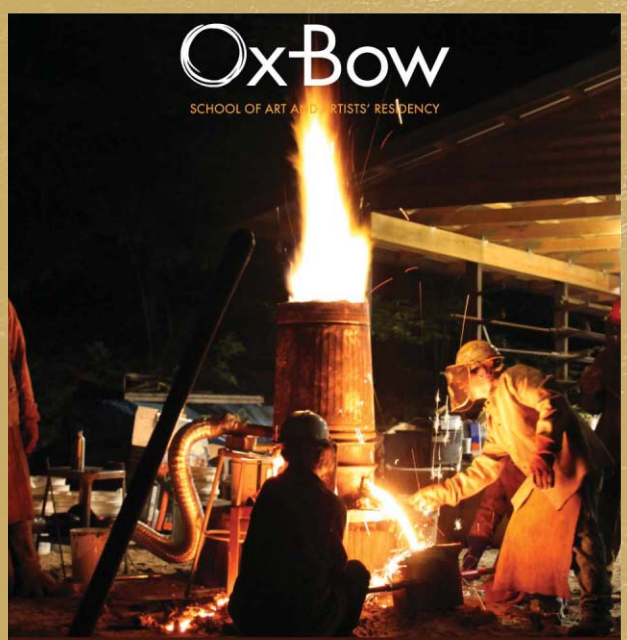

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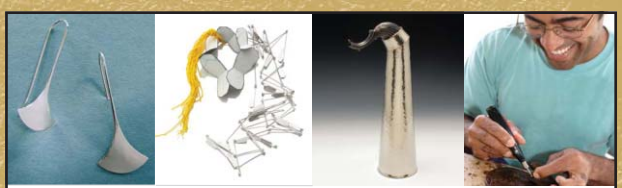

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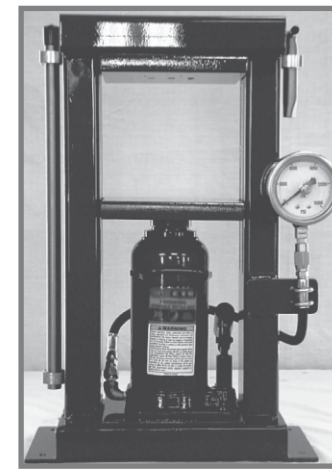
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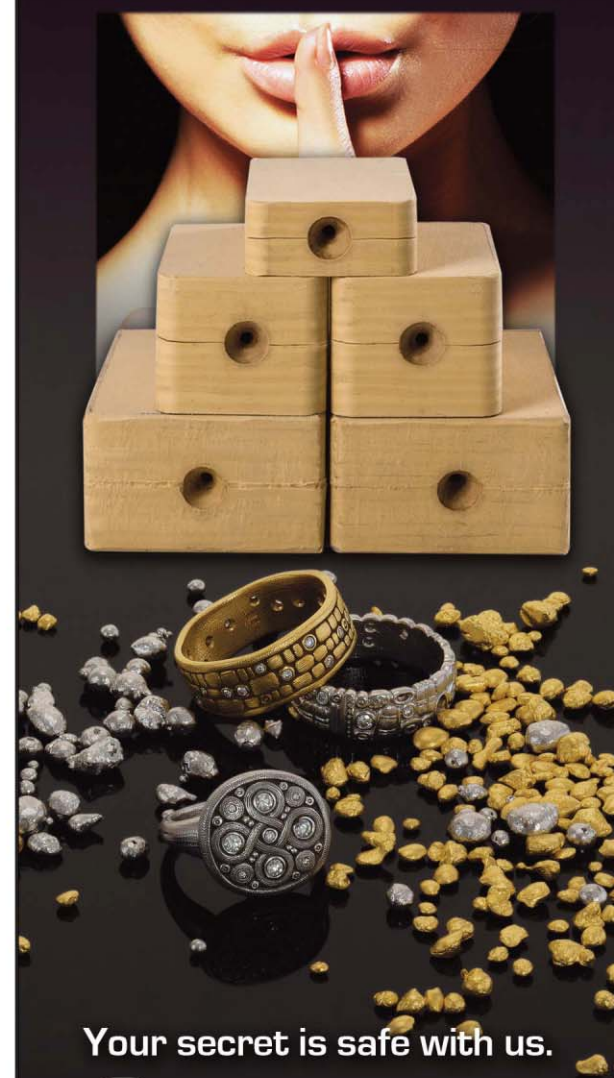

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